

THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

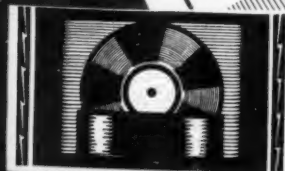
NOVEMBER, 1939

Articles by — THE EDITOR, ALESSANDRO BAVASTRO
ARTHUR WALDECK AND ROBERT S. LANIER

Portrait — SIR. EDWARD ELGAR

RECORD NOTES & REVIEWS - OVERTONES

COLLECTORS' CORNER - SWING MUSIC NOTES - ETC.



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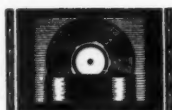
TWENTY-FIVE CENTS - THE COVER



THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER

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<i>Page</i>	<i>By</i>
238	Some Reflections on Elgar's Enigma Variations.....Peter Hugh Reed
242	Singers as Actors.....Alessandro Bavastro
245	Style in Singing.....Arthur Waldeck
247	Technical Topics.....Robert S. Lanier
248	Record Collectors' Corner.....Julian Morton Moses
249	Overtones
251	Editorial Notes
252	Swing Music Notes.....Enzo Archetti
254	Record Notes and Reviews
275	In the Popular VeinHorace Van Norman

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Frontispiece: Prominent Musical Personalities — Past and Present
No. 25 — Sir EDWARD ELGAR

SOME REFLECTIONS ON ELGAR'S ENIGMA VARIATIONS

PETER HUGH REED

VICTOR ISSUED IN SEPTEMBER AN ALBUM of Elgar's *Enigma Variations** without any advertising fanfare. This may seem strange when we point out that from a purely musical standpoint, this set is among the most important symphonic releases of the past year. Some statistical knowledge of record sales, however, throws some light, for, much as we dislike saying it, Elgar seems to be more of a liability on records than an asset. Even the H.M.V. company in England has shown reluctance to re-record the two symphonies of this eminent British composer, despite the fact that the *Symphony in A flat* has been hailed as the first great English symphony. Elgar's *Enigma Variations* remains after forty years one of the most distinguished modern scores in the concert repertoire; a work that has survived its era and outdistanced many contemporary scores that were once also highly regarded. It is a work that deserves to be known intimately by every discerning musical enthusiast.

It has been heartening to note that the reviewers have given this set of the *Enigma* a laudatory send-off. Perhaps it will aid the cause of Elgar on records. And since he was the first great modern composer of England, it might not be amiss at this time for us to turn our attentions to Elgar and his music.

Victor had reasons, other than its musical value, for bringing forward at this time this set of the *Enigma* (long overdue, since it was recorded in 1936); for an American spotlight had been recently focused on its conductor, Sir Adrian Boult. It will be remembered that a recent series of concerts of English music, given in connection with the New York World's Fair, was conducted by Sir Adrian. At that time, he reinforced an impression, made earlier in this country, that he was gifted with substantial musical talents. Re-hearings of Boult's performance of the *Enigma* (as recorded) confirms my earlier conviction that

his is the best version of the work at present available. And it may well "be the final version for many a year", as its sponsors contend.

When I think of Elgar, I am also reminded of Robert Browning. There are qualities common to these two: a certain stolidity, a rhetorical beauty, a romantic earnestness, a deep love of humanity, and—above all—an inherent probity. Too, there is a similar esoteric trend in their separate arts. I have previously expounded at length upon the probity in Elgar's character and the domination of this same quality in his music. Both Elgar and Browning bring to mind among other things Gothic cathedrals, the English spring, and the quiet, complacent beauty of her countryside.

The reflection of a frenetic, mechanized world does not appear in Elgar's music; and it is because this is missing one can return to it again and again as one returns to Brahms. Yet, though Elgar may be said to have had some spiritual affinity to Brahms, it is a mistake to term him an English Brahms. The two are definitely separate and distinctive composers.

For those who are interested in a picture of the man and his music, I recommend W. H. Reed's book on Elgar.** Mr. Reed, a well-known solo violinist and the concertmaster of the London Symphony Orchestra, was a close personal friend of Elgar's, and was intimately concerned with the production and performance of many of his works. This close association through the years allowed the author to view Elgar's music, to some extent, as the composer saw it. It has also provided him with some interesting personal anecdotes and reminiscences. If the survey of the composer's music is not as far-reaching as a musician might like it to be, it is nevertheless the dominant theme of the book.

If Elgar had never written his two sym-

* Set M-475, three discs, price \$5.00. Played by the B.B.C. Sym. Orch., dir. Sir Adrian Boult.

** Elgar. By W. H. Reed. E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., New York, 1939. 216 pp. Price \$2.00.

phonies or any other orchestral works, his reputation as a master of the modern orchestra would remain established by the *Enigma Variations*. In this work, Mr. Reed points out, he early showed "a crystallization of his ideas and his complete mastery of every orchestral device in presenting them clearly with that sureness of touch and confidence which amazed many of his contemporaries. Elgar, like his contemporary Rimsky-Korsakoff, was not afraid to use his instruments as soloists and did not necessarily double them with some other from a different group, as if fearful that it would not come off or penetrate unless amplified by this addition, as is perpetually done by Schumann, Brahms and a great many modern composers. He liked the individual sounds of the various voices in his orchestra and knew their strength and their power to penetrate the texture of the combined strings or wind combination".

There was in Elgar's personality something elusive; this was noted by his closest friends. He was an enigma himself and his life truly a variation on the theme. The author brings this out in his book. He tells us that Elgar "could make outrageous remarks or observations on occasion, just to see the effect" on others, and, that he was "always doing and saying the unexpected. It only remained for him, having set himself to music, to portray his friends as seen through his own eyes, which always saw the unusual in everyone, and to set them to music in their relationship as friends to himself."

There has been considerable speculation on the "tune" of which the original theme of the *Enigma* is said to be a counterpoint. Elgar claimed that it could be combined with his own theme and with each variation. In carrying the secret of this "tune" to his grave, the composer has left a problem that will exercise the minds of musicians and writers on music for a long time to come. The title of this work and the many conjectures that title has engendered may well prove helpful to the increase of public interest in this music. No one can deny that the general public loves a mystery, and Elgar's ironic evasiveness on the subject of the so-called inspiration "tune" has supplied an intriguing one. Considerable ink has been spilt upon it already (and more is added herewith). Ernest Newman recently expanded upon the subject in four long articles in the London Sunday Times. *** There

were few things that Elgar enjoyed as much as mystification, says Mr. Newman. And he should know whereof he speaks for he made several efforts to get Elgar to shed some light on the tune behind the *Enigma*.

According to Newman the late Sir Landon Ronald always believed that Elgar was enjoying a bit of "leg-pulling" about the secret melody; and this viewpoint seems to be shared by many others. "Does this mean, then," says Newman, "that Elgar deliberately put a falsehood into circulation? No one who knew him would entertain that idea for a moment." Thus the noted critic upholds the probity in Elgar's character. Newman goes on to point out that Elgar once said that "there is nothing to gain in an artistic or musical sense by solving the enigma of any of the personalities; the listener should hear the music as music, and not trouble himself with its intricacies of 'Program'." It is true that the work can be fully enjoyed as absolute music; but it is equally true that the identification of the subjects of some of Elgar's musical characterizations heightens the listener's enjoyment; variations 3, 9 and 11 offer pertinent examples of this. The humor in 3 and 11 are better appreciated with a knowledge of what the composer had in mind, and the "mood of Beethoven" is better understood in 9.

Elgar's Statement

Around the time of the first performance (1899), Elgar wrote: "It is true that I have sketched for their amusement and mine the 'idiosyncracies of fourteen of my friends, not necessarily musicians; but this is a personal matter, and need not have been mentioned publicly. The Variations should stand simply as a 'piece' of music. The Enigma I will not explain—its dark saying must be left unguessed, and I warn you that the apparent connection between the Variations and the theme is often of the slightest texture; further, through and over the whole set another and large theme 'goes' but is not played. . . . So the principal theme never appears, even as in some late dramas, e. g., Maeterlinck's *L'Intruse* and *Les Sept Princesses*, the chief character is never on the stage."

Analyzing this, Newman emphasizes the phrase, "the dark saying must be left unguessed", and goes on to say "does not the disjunctive 'further' of itself suggest that the 'dark saying' of the Enigma, of which he [Elgar] has been previously speaking, is something of this 'other theme'?" Pointing to Elgar's reference to Maeterlinck, he notes that the "chief character" in each play mentioned is none

*** April 16, 23, 30 and May 7, 1939.

other than Death. He then suggests that the counterpart of the Enigma "is not something melodic that is or could be 'played', but an idea that 'goes though and over the whole set' in very much the way that the invisible, inaudible, impalpable Presence goes through and over the whole action of *L'Intruse*." This other "theme", he continues, may simply have been Elgar himself, his loves and his friends. "May it not have been some highly emotionalized idea of this kind," he asks, "not, as we have come to imagine, a 'tune', that he fancifully chose to describe as the 'principal theme' of his work, the mysterious something that went through and over the whole set?"

Mr. Newman points out further that it is more than likely that Elgar meant "larger" in the "purely psychological sense", as a synonym of "grander" or "nobler". Summarizing, the critic says that "from the letters that have reached me on the subject I gather that several people have independently come to the conclusion that . . . the hidden 'theme' is friendship, or something of that kind." Friendship, he goes on, evidently "meant more for the exceedingly sensitive Elgar than it does for most people."

The Parsifal Idea

Between quotations of remarks from friends of Elgar, most of whom profess to believe in the existence of a real tune, Newman tells us that he was with the composer one day "just after an American writer sprung upon the world the bright theory that the long-sought missing 'theme' was a certain motive from *Parsifal*." He asked Elgar what he thought of this, and the composer laughed genially and agreed with the critic that the Parsifal theme simply could not be made to go with the Enigma theme or the Variations. I quote this, not because I attach any importance to the aptness of the Parsifal theme, but because the story is credited in America with having first come from an English conductor, now residing here. As it goes here, this conductor asked Elgar about the possibility of fitting a theme from *Parsifal* to the Variations, to which the composer, "with the well-known twinkle in his eye", replied "how interesting", or some other evasive retort.

For the sake of completeness it may be mentioned that among the tunes that have been seriously suggested as the Enigma are: the *Volga Boat Song*, *Auld lang syne*, *All Through the Night*, and *Pop Goes the Weasel*.

To return to the theory of a "highly emotional idea", advanced by Mr. Newman, this

is not an improbable one; perhaps the so-called "theme" was merely an emotional or a philosophical, not a musical one. Knowing Elgar's strongly religious turn of mind, I would be inclined to believe, if Mr. Newman is right, that the idea was also tinged with some deeply mystical significance. If the motive was one of "friendship", it is possible that it is not ordinary friendship Elgar had in mind but something much more sweeping, unalterable by either life or death.

As far as the music is concerned all this is besides the point. The music speaks for itself. It is one of the few works of Elgar that I find wholly satisfying. And, because Victor has advanced this fine recording of it and made me newly appreciative of the music, I feel justified in recalling this set to my readers' attention. Perhaps Victor will give us a recording of Elgar's *Introduction and Allegro* to place next to the *Variations* upon the library shelf. It would be a fitting tribute to English music and to the composer at this time, for it too, in my opinion, is a satisfying score. In passing, it might not be amiss to suggest that the incomparable Toscanini be induced to record this latter work.

Though the mysterious "theme" was said by Elgar himself to be the counterpart of a well-known tune, which is not alluded to in the work, I am inclined to agree with the ever sagacious Tovey when he says—"I find nothing enigmatic in the composition, and until I do I shall not bother my head with an enigma which concerns no question of mine. Another part of the enigma is personal; and as such is the private affair of the composer and those friends of his whom it concerns. To them it is probably no enigma."

Since the characters depicted belonged to Elgar's private circle of friends, and since most of them, if not all, are unknown even by name to American audiences, there is no reason to identify them all here. Even in England, it is doubtful that more than a few are widely known.

The work is based the upon the theme given above. After the B section, the A section is repeated.

There are fourteen parts to the work besides the introduction. Two of these have sub-titles, part 10 being marked *Intermezzo* and part 13 *Romanza*.

Part 1 is dedicated to the composer's wife; the theme is exalted most impressively in a manner that is encountered again in the finale.

Part 2 is dedicated to a pianist who was a member of a trio in which Elgar played the violin. The music has an animated, chatty



quality. The A part of the theme is given to the basses.

Part 3 has the character of a mazurka. According to W. H. Reed it is dedicated to a friend, "who had a very deep resonant voice. The bassoon therefore is prominent in the variation." It is based on the B section of the theme.

Part 4, stormy in character, makes use of the whole theme. It is dedicated to a friend who inevitably spoke forcibly and to the point when in a discussion.

Part 5 is dedicated to a son of Matthew Arnold, the son being a lover of chamber music. The basses and cellos give out the A part of the theme, and the flute skips through the B section. The music is beautifully contrasted.

Part 6 is dedicated to a violin pupil. The entire theme is used. The *cantilena* of the solo viola is suggestive of a gentle lady fiddler.

Part 7 is dedicated to an architect. A persistent figure in a cross-rhythm springs out of the A section, but it is the B section that is recognizable in the mounting flights of the music.

Part 8, dedicated to an unmarried lady, is appropriately charming and delicate. The theme is divided between the woodwinds and the violins.

Part 9 is one of the noblest pieces of music Elgar ever wrote. Mostly drawn from the A section of the theme, it is a most imaginative and eventful extension of it. It is dedicated to A. J. Jaeger, one-time editor of the *Music Times*, and, according to Elgar, "is a record of a long summer evening talk, when my friend grew nobly eloquent . . . on the grandeur of Beethoven, and especially of his slow movements."

Part 10, of gossamer delicacy, is dedicated to a close feminine friend of the composer. To her is given the B section of the theme, and being a woman she naturally alters it considerably.

Part 11 is dedicated to an organist who

owned a bulldog. It is derived from both parts of the theme. The dog "is depicted in the opening three bars rushing down the banks of the River Wye and then vigorously paddling upstream." W. H. Reed suggests that Elgar saw something in common between the dog and his master, the one paddling in the water and the other pedaling at his organ. The music conveys both effects.

Part 12, says Tovey, "turns the theme into a melancholy serenade for the cellos." It is dedicated to the cellist who assisted in the trio mentioned in Variation 2.

Part 13 is dedicated to a feminine friend who had gone on a long sea voyage. Neither section of the theme is clearly recognizable here. The sea is suggested in the undulating figure in the violas, over which a clarinet recalls a theme from Mendelssohn's overture, *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*. The drum roll in the concluding bars is heard through the sea motive and the Mendelssohn theme "like the faint throb of the engines of a big liner" (Newman).

Part 14, bears the initials of a nickname by which Elgar was known to his closest friends. Thus after beginning with a musical "picture" of his wife and continuing with a dozen of his friends*, he applies musical characterization to himself. The affinity between his wife and himself is recognizable in the reminiscence of Variation 1. This final variation is said to depict Elgar's own struggle, "a struggle which had not met with much success up to this period of his life" (W. H. Reed). The richly scored march-like section of this movement again pays tribute to his friend Jaeger and one realizes that the faith that Jaeger had in Elgar (he was one of the first to champion the composer's cause) here found noble nourishment. The exhilaration of the final pages should not be described but rather experienced.

* Elgar spoke of "fourteen of his friends", yet the finale actually bears initials referring to himself. It is another example of his fondness for mystification.



SINGERS AS ACTORS*

ALESSANDRO BAVASTRO

VISSI D'ARTE, VISSI D'AMORE PER IL TEATRO! (For art and love of the theatre I have lived.) Thus Tosca may be paraphrased. I have sung for conductors who could drive even the floor boards of the stage insane. Before the World War it was in Russia: after the war it was in my native Italy. I sang with good and bad singers; some well paid and others not so well paid. I always loved art more than the profit from it. In all truth, I can say that I gave the theatre every beat of my heart. Why? Because art itself was sufficient reward for me.

It is always said that singers, beyond a doubt, *have* to be good actors. But are they? Singing gets in the way of acting, and acting gets in the way of singing. Why does the hunchbacked and deformed Rigoletto straighten out and become twice as tall when he takes a high note? Why must a Scarpia inevitably (in Italy at least) make a movement with his hand as if he were catching a fly, when he sings the phrase "A quest'ora i miei segugi le due prede azzannano." Why must it be, over and over again, that in the duet between Santuzza and Turiddu, two protagonists firmly rooted in the middle of the stage, holding each other's arms, and looking like two volunteer firemen pumping water—why must it be that they interrupt this fatiguing work only at the

end of each musical phrase, so that Turiddu may hurl Santuzza to the ground? Of course Santuzza rises again and begins the scene once more, a little to the right, a little to the left, finally falling again upon the hard floor with the vigorous aid of her companion. And when, in this manner, Santuzza has swept clean the entire stage, Turiddu dashes into the church as if pursued by a thousand devils and poor Santa, after a brief rest, runs towards the entrance of the church and with a final high note falls one last time to the ground.

Why does Iago, when he first enters upon the stage, very plainly make it understood by sundry slinkings and furtive glances that he is a rascal while everyone is supposed to think him a valorous officer, Otello himself calling him "honest Iago"?

Why does Scarpia, in the second act, instead of extending his arm to hand Sciarone the note he has written to the diva take it to him in person, evidently forgetting that Sciarone is a servant? Why do Toscas inevitably wear gowns that seem to have been expressly designed to get in the way of every stage prop, to say nothing of Tosca's and Scarpia's feet? Why do they always present a Micaela who looks like a German college girl, when she is supposed to be a Spanish peasant? Why must the tenor invariably drop all stage business when he comes to a high note, like Rodolfo in *Bohème*, who nonchalantly forsakes Mimi to address his fervent and confidential remarks directly to the audience? But no one can prognosticate the

* Freely translated by Enzo Archetti from "I cantanti, è inutile, devono essere buoni attori" by Alessandro Bavastro, in "La Lettura", of Milan, October 1937.



The characters are many but the gestures are always the same.

behavior of tenors. Very often, in their own quaint way, they achieve heights very close to sublimity, as did the one who, when asked in an examination "Who was Rhadames?" answered "A tenor!" And then there is the case of Amneris and Aida, who invariably transpose digital positions as though one were taking the cue from the other. (See illustrations on page 244). And last, why, oh why, must Lohengrin and Telramund, in their first act combat, simply click shields and glare at each other?

There is no denying that our young singers represent the best vocal material available in the world today because of their natural talents. They possess an innate musical sense, the best of voices, and natural graceful movements. Yet to judge from their expressions, our singers continue to sing things that mean nothing to them, making conventional and illogical gestures which they transmit from one to the other as "traditions."

Bel canto seems lost

However, there is also no denying that the quality of singers has fallen off since the Golden Age of Italian bel canto. The few exceptions do not count, or serve only to prove the rule. The only reason for this deplorable state of affairs is this: today we are persuaded that one can acquire full mastery of one's voice in a year or two of superficial study. Too much faith, in fact, is placed in the absurd belief, commonly held, that it suffices if one is born an artist and that all that is necessary is to make some attempt to learn to use the voice. For the youths who study, and, what is worse, for the many voice teachers, the acme of success lies in making a debut in the shortest possible time.

Our fathers left us as a heritage an art unsurpassed by any other country. But they

dedicated six to eight years to the study of the voice alone.

Contrary to what is said by many voice teachers and doctors of medicine, I am convinced that to attain the perfect voice one must begin work during the tender years, just as the virtuosi of the piano and violin do. A rational study in childhood days, before the voice has changed, can be nothing but helpful because at that age it is a simple matter to adapt the organs and temperament to a severe discipline. To become a good athlete no one begins to prepare himself when he is twenty. The study of singing is nothing but an exercise of the vocal and respiratory organs.

Many of the best singers in the world began studying as children; otherwise they could not have appeared in public when they were so young. Lablache made his debut at 17 years; Tamburini at 18; Rubini at 19; Tamberlick at 20; Patti at 12; Giuditta Pasta at 15; Malibran at 16 (she began her studies at 5); Barbara Marchisio and Pisoni at 18; and my teacher, Antonio Cotogni, at 21.

Preparing for Opera

Antonio Cotogni's first big success was in the church of Saint Eustacchio, in Rome, during a performance of Salvatore Capocci's *Oratorio*. But the first opera in which he figured, for which he prepared for one whole year, was *Elisir d'Amore*. We call attention to this fact to show young singers that debuts in very dramatic or responsible parts are not recommended and are downright harmful in most cases. An ample voice is insufficient. Mastery and experience are more important. During his career Cotogni sang 157 different operas, passing without difficulty from *Barbiere di Siviglia* to *Africana*, from *Traviata* to *Trovatore*, etc. The point is, I repeat, in knowing how to sing, that is, in the perfect preparation of the vocal organ.



There is another reason for the decline of lyric art. It is the widespread opinion that a lyric artist does not need to know the art of interpretation; that it is something entirely separate from singing. The reason why has never been explained. It is only clear that for the interpretation of a role it is not enough merely to sing the words of the part: it is necessary to look like, move like, and be the character itself. Notwithstanding, singers, with obstinate incomprehension, limit themselves to a few conventional and insipid gestures and some traditional stage business, the origin of which is ambiguous. The character may vary, but the gesture is always the same (note illustrations.) One night, Tamagno, taking advantage of a moment while singing with Valentina (in the duet in *Les Huguenots*) approached a window to spit. Since that day each novice tenor approaches the window to scrutinize who knows what in the distance. Another example concerns the baritone (evidently an ardent reader of Fenimore Cooper) who, at the end of the duet with Aida, before saying "Coraggio, ei giunge, là tutt'udrò," stretched himself on the ground and placed his ear close to the floor boards. And all the other baritones since then have done the same, without thinking, evidently, that it is impossible in that manner to hear the steps of a man who is approaching cautiously; and that if certain savages used that method of listening, it was to listen for the sound of horses' hoofbeats. Hundreds of such examples could be cited.

Of course, not all artists are content merely to lift a left arm every once in a while. There have been some endowed with such exuberant temperaments, overacting in a manner so unexpected, that the public delightedly burst into applause. I saw a tenor who, in the finale of *Bohème*, while crying despairingly "Mimi, Mimi", threw himself so violently upon the floor that he slid, head-first, under the bed. The success of this was indescribable, leaving the tenor with the feeling of really having done something.

Poor Gianfranco Giachetti, in the preface to Doctor Molcianovsky's book *How to Cheat* writes, among other things: "In truth, here in Italy it is customary to improvise theatrically; and even if it is not boasted about, neither is it considered something to be ashamed of." It may not be a shame, but as far as the lyric theatre is concerned, it certainly is not anything to boast about.

In Russia, especially in the Imperial Theatres of Moscow and St. Petersburg and in Stanislavsky's Art Theatre, great importance was attached to the art of interpretation. Why cannot the same be done here, as well as elsewhere, with the understanding, of course, that we still remain faithful to our natural disposition and taste? It is important to create groups of young singers who are convinced that it is necessary to execute a part like a part in a drama. It is time to dispel the absurd notion that action interferes with singing. All singers make motions, only these motions lack significance. The point, then, lies in substituting motions that



make sense for motions that are merely insipid.

Is it necessary to recall the Russian bass, Chaliapin? There are some who may point out that, though Chaliapin was without doubt a great actor, his voice was not all one might desire. That is said only by those who heard him in his later years, when he was already over 60 years of age, and after 40 years of a lyric career. But there are surely persons in Milan who still remember the delirium of the La Scala audience when Chaliapin sang Boito's *Mefistofele*. Moreover, the Italians also have had singers who were great actors: Scotti, Darclée, Giraldoni, and Kaschmann, to name but a few. It is time we persuaded ourselves that a word in the mouth of a singer

is movement. With words that adhere to the musical phrase, the movement of ideas is expressed. The movements of the body, therefore, must be absolutely appropriate to the state of mind. Only in this way can a true interpretation of a character be realized. In certain Northern countries the lack of a good voice has forced singers to substitute a highly developed recitative. It has been asked what will happen to the lyric theatre if we should eventually decide to make serious revisions of the so-called traditions. Believe us, it is but a legend, a fairy tale, that the Italians have no aptitude for acting in the lyric theatre. They have only neglected its discipline and trusted too much in the magic of their beautiful voices.

STYLE IN SINGING

ARTHUR WALDECK

THE PHONOGRAPH OFFERS A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY to those of us who are interested in the study of style in singing; for we have the privilege, denied to previous generations, of comparing the art of the greatest singers of the last forty years or so.

To study style in art entails difficulty largely because there are several aspects of art, each of which can be properly called style, and because these aspects are not sharply marked off from each other, but tend to run together. In singing we may find two main categories of style. First we have the many types of structure used by composers for the expressive purposes of their work. Schubert's *Du bist die Ruh*, Mozart's *Das Veilchen* and Brahms' *Liebestreu* all show different structural elements, and they constitute marked varieties of style within the field of the lied. The three songs may be described for the present purpose, although with the knowledge that the descriptions are highly inadequate, as smooth, sprightly and agitated respectively, and these qualities obviously flow from the structural elements of the songs, such as tempo, rhythm, harmony. The composer of genius has seen to it that there is no discrepancy between the significance of the words and the contours and pulses of the music. It

is the task of the singer to penetrate into the art work and to understand fully its structure and the emotional significance of that structure.

It is clear that the great variety of vocal music will call forth a large number of manners of performance, ranging all the way from the soft simplicity of *Flow Gently Sweet Afton* to the torrent of *Otello's Death* from Verdi's opera. The second category of style mentioned above includes the singer's grasp of the composition, and his use of the correct means to perform it. We can sum up the two meanings of style as they are used here by referring to the composer's choice of expressive means, and the singer's grasp and performance of them. The rest of this discussion will be devoted to a study of the singer's contribution in the performance of a piece of music.

The singer's conception of a song is an amalgam of musicianship, knowledge, feeling and experience, cast in his personal mold. Because each artist thus presents a unique phenomenon, there can be a number of equally appropriate performances of the same selection, all different from each other. For example, we may compare Tetrizzini's crystalline *Caro Nome* (Victor No. 7883) with Melba's mellifluous version (Victor No. 88078). This variety, wonderful as it is for the art of sing-

ing, adds confusion to the problem of style, and a preference for one or the other rendition must not be allowed to blind one to just claims of appropriateness that may be advanced for both.

In taking stock of an artist's individual characteristics, we must not restrict ourselves to those subtle qualities that make up his personality. We must include also a consideration of his vocal instrument and its communicative powers, for voices vary in the amount of meaning they can convey. In illustration of this point, it is well known that to one's self one's singing may express all one has in mind and heart, but usually even the most devoted friend fails to perceive the artistic intent of, say, the bathtub vocalist. The sounds he produces simply do not match his mental picture of them.

The purpose of giving thought to the problem of style in singing is to help us form a judgment of the singer's stylistic intent and success with which that intent is realized. Into this judgment must enter not only one's idea of how the piece should be performed, but a willingness to understand and accept another, possibly more mature grasp of the art work. When the singer fails to carry conviction, there must enter also an estimate of whether the failure is due to insufficient insight or to an inadequately responsive vocal organ.

McCormack's Art

Let us examine some of the records of a brilliant stylist, John McCormack. Probably no singer has ever surpassed him in universality of understanding and achievement. There is a story that McCormack and Caruso once came arm in arm to a door. The former drew aside with the remark, "Make way for the greatest tenor in the world." Caruso replied, "Enter, Giovanni." The story deserves to be true even though Caruso had qualities (of which more later) that made most people place him before the great Irishman. The range of McCormack's genius is vividly shown in the following well nigh perfect renditions of widely differing compositions.

Don Giovanni: Il mio tesoro (Victor No. 74484); *Pur dicesti* (Lotti) (Victor No. 1081), *Molly Brannigan* (Victor No. 743), *Oh, Sleep* (Handel) (Victor No. 66096), and *Schlafendes Jesuskind* (Wolf) (Victor No. 1272).

Now, there seems never to have been a completely universal singer, which is quite understandable, since vocal music covers virtually all of human experience. (The claims made for such singers as Lilli Lehmann on this score do not stand up under close examina-

tion. One has only to hear Lehmann's amazing, even stupendous performance of the *Sempre libre* from *Traviata* [Odeon 52741/2] to recognize in its rigid angularity a failure to grasp the expressive means proper to Verdi, which include the rubato, and the correct dwelling on climax tones. In order, however, to avoid a false impression about the respect due Lilli Lehmann, we point to her many perfect performances of German music, including the intense *Or sai chi l'onore* from *Don Giovanni*, and the deeply felt *Heil'ge Quelle* from *Marriage of Figaro*, on Odeon records.) John McCormack, too, was not without his limitations. His instrument never achieved full freedom, so that its power and intensity fell off sooner than they should have done. He was forced either to eschew highly dramatic music, or to scale it down (with taste and balance, to be sure) to the confines of his tonal palette. Compare McCormack's singing of *Che gelida manina* (Victor No. 74222) with Caruso's (Victor No. 8002). Caruso, above all recent singers, possessed an instrument responsive in the fullest degree imaginable, so that he could sing perfectly the type of dramatic music that McCormack was unable fully to encompass. It is this type of music that is most compelling to the majority of lovers of singing; and Caruso's complete mastery of it was the secret of his success. But even Caruso felt limits—of power, as is shown by his avoidance of the role of Othello, of insight (presumably), as is shown by his failure to sing Wagner. This view of Caruso's feeling towards Wagner is confirmed by the fact that he knew at least the role of Tristan, as we are told by Huneker in one of his essays. It is quite inconceivable that Caruso's voice was not strong enough for Wagner's music. Possibly he felt grown up to Wagner only late in his career, and his untimely death may have deprived us of Wagnerian performances bordering on the fabulous. Caruso had also some limitations that he failed to perceive, as his frequent absurd Italianizations of English songs make obvious—for instance the recording of *A Dream* (Victor No. 1658) and *The Lost Chord* (Victor No. 8806), which are in many other respects marvelous.

A Convincing Artist

John McCormack, despite the physical limitations mentioned, had sufficient voice to permit convincing presentations, but there are some fine artists whose vocal equipment falls far short of what they need fully to convey their intentions. The sympathetic listener must supply some of the failings. Such sing-

ers as Elena Gerhardt (tortured high notes, insufficient intensity range), Lotte Lehmann (shortness of breath, insufficient intensity range), Emilio DeGogorza (tremolo, labored tone utterance), represent a courageous band who make no compromise with their ideals, but often fail nevertheless to realize them as fully as they undoubtedly conceive them.

Less praiseworthy are artists with generous vocal powers but little sense of responsibility to the music they sing. They are content with giving a smooth, uneventful performance, or a meretriciously calculated one, or a superficially emotional one. It is juster not to give examples of these singers by name, for there are quite a lot of them (among them some of the most famous names in the world) and to mention a few would single them out for a rebuke that belongs to all. The reader will have no difficulty in finding some members of this group on his radio. This class the art lover will ignore for the large part, or appreciate for their performance of the pretty songs suited to their talents.

The Distortionists

There is a final group of vocalists who arouse the active impatience of serious auditors—and serious does not at all mean gloomy. They are the singers who distort the music they sing to fit into the frame of their very meager equipment, and then imply that the monster is an original, individual version. There is a very successful tenor in America, with an emaculate voice of good range that passes for being sweet. He "sells" the sweetness by dragging out everything unconscionably, sliding from pitch to pitch, and reducing all selections to the same level of sweetness, sweetness, sweetness. This also constitutes a style, for it is a manner of performance, but it is as far from the stylistic genius of a McCormack as is the tinkling of a heifer's bell from the orchestra of Toscanini.

In the study of style in singing, therefore, one must be guided by the following questions: Does the singer's conception match up to the art work? (This question is presented not without awareness of the problem it can easily touch off—namely, "by what standards?" However, the implications in the body of this essay seem sufficient to warrant the formation as given.) Is his instrument adequate to the task in hand; is he free from concessions to some spiritual or physical poverty; in short does he project a penetrating conception successfully? If the answer to all of these questions is yes, the style is good, and the artist may be counted a worthy member of a fraternity smaller than it ought to be.

TECHNICAL TOPICS

ROBERT S. LANIER

■ We were just in time, in September's issue, with the article on frequency-modulated radio and its possible effects on the quality of sound reproduction. *Fortune* magazine, quiveringly conscious, as ever, of Trends, Crusades, and Significant Developments in American Life, gives an article in the October issue to Major Armstrong's battle to put his invention on the map. The importance of frequency modulation to quality standards is given a front place in the *Fortune* writers's line-up of fact and interpretation. Meanwhile the Armstrong system makes steady progress in getting on the air. The Yankee network is building two stations, one at Alpine, New York, and one in New England, which it is hoped will cover the whole New York—New England section with its twenty million people. General Electric receivers are in showrooms in many Eastern cities, in a variety of models priced for a wide market. An experimental station is operating in Washington as a demonstration post for a firm of radio engineers.

A reader has encountered the terms "constant velocity" and "constant amplitude" as applied to recording methods and wants to know what the difference is. An understanding of these terms is important, since they describe two distinct but commonly employed recording techniques which do not mix well without corrective factors.

In "constant velocity" recording, the cutting point moves so that its *speed of motion* is the same for any given loudness, no matter what the frequency. In other words, to represent equal loudness at 5000 cycles per second and at 50 cycles requires that the recording cutter—and the reproducing needle—move with the *same speed* at the lower frequency as at the higher. A moment's consideration will show that, since the needle travels in one direction for 100 times as long at 50 cycles as it does at 5000, (1/50 second against 1/5000), an equal speed will mean that it travels 100 times *as far* at 50 cycles as it does at 5000. A constant velocity groove, therefore, must continuously expand from treble into bass in order to maintain equal loudness, the width of the groove at the lowest bass frequencies being

as much as several hundred times that at the higher treble frequencies.

A "constant amplitude" groove, on the other hand, is made so that equal distances of the groove off center, no matter what the frequency, represent equal loudness. A constant amplitude groove will be exactly the same width at 5000 cycles as at 50, for equal loudness of tone, the difference between the two being, of course, the closeness with which the needle swings are spaced in a direction linear to the groove.

These terms will be used frequently in our further discussion of pickups (which has been delayed by necessary research), since the magnetic pickup is in general "constant velocity", whereas the crystal is "constant amplitude." To confuse matters further is the fact that the present-day records are recorded approximately "constant velocity" above 300 cycles and "constant amplitude" below, requiring some sort of correction no matter what pickup is used. These relationships will be discussed in more detail in succeeding articles.

Record Collectors' Corner . . .

Julian Morton Moses

■ Reverting once again to the branch of imported recordings available mainly through foreign language catalogues in this country, it is always worth our time to consider the many treasures to be found on Victor blackface records. All those discussed here have two things in common: the black color of the label and the European origin of the recording. Other than that, they vary as widely as imaginable both as to the type of selection and the standard of rendition.

But first a little bit of history would not be amiss. When Victor here first established trade relationships with the already preeminent European outfit of the Gramophone and Typewriter Company, it immediately came into possession of masters of some of the most renowned names in the operatic world. These it exploited to the best of its ability at two and a half dollars per record and thus made such Americans as could afford it part owners, as it were, in the art of such diverse

songsters as Calve, Caruso, De Lucia, Garbin, Michailowa, Battistini, Suzanne Adams, Plançon, Ackte, Kristmann, Scotti, Renaud, De Luca, Giraltoni, Affre, Gresse, Note, Agussol, Delmas, Litvinne and others. Thus started the 5000 series which, in spite of the above admonition, were red-seal records insofar as these artists were concerned anyway.

Soon it became evident that record collecting would have to be made cheaper if it was going to expand (how little times change). Therefore readjustments began. Such selections of the above artists as were kept in the catalogue were changed in number to the 91000 series (still red-seal), but several new groups of imported recordings were added, all black-seal and all lower priced. These were numbered 51000 for 7-inch records, 61000 for 10-inch and 71000 for 12-inch. Since they constituted a bid for foreign language customers of all types, most of the new names were of merely temporary significance but a few like Huguet, De Segurola, Orel, and Kruszelnicka are still important to devotees of recorded voices (incidentally, the first two of this group were earlier in the high numbers of the 5000 series while the last later elevated to the red-seal 66000 series.)

Toward the close of 1905, the popularity of the domestic red seal groups, then two years old, was firmly established, and the higher (sic) class of music they represented found to be a paying commodity. But another price reduction was in the offing and a still greater effort was made to attract the opera-lovers in the lower brackets by vastly increasing the amount of good operatic pieces on black-face records. The color-badge of the singers might be different and their royalties considerably less but the music was the same and the company probably made just as much money in the long run.

However, the afore-mentioned price change which became effective in 1906 caused a slight aberration in our otherwise smooth and undoubtedly boring history. The 61000 series, to which in October 1905 had been added several pieces by the ever pleasing Michailowa, (all highly recommended to the unlikely ones who do not already know her art), were now identical in price with the cheaper red-seal records, so they changed the color. But don't fear; several new series were then added which we will take sadistic delight in describing in equally excruciating detail in our next article.

Meanwhile, having brought up the lady whose first privilege it was to make palatable the female vocal organ as precariously repro-

duced by that early thing called the talking machine, it is only fair to allow her at least a reasonably complete listing of her Victor records, if not the hundreds and hundreds of examples of her versatile artistry which never reached this shore except as imported by enterprising but foolish dealers. She made at least half a thousand different recordings but any and all, including even the earliest listed below, will astound you with the limpid beauty of tone and—even more startling—the wonderful clarity of reproduction. This seemed to be contagious even to usually uncertain flutes which accompanied her, the first below belonging to one Mr. Semenov.

List of Victor records of Marie Michailowa (the 91000 series below are 1902 recordings, which appeared in red-seal only; the 61000 series were issued in 1905 as black-face records but were changed in 1906 to red-seal, after which time the three items were added): 91036 *Lucia—Mad Scene*, 91037 *Serenade* (Gounod), 91060 *Seest thou the Moon* (Duet with Davidow), 91061 *Crucifix* (Duet with Orlov), 91063 *Perle du Bresil*, 61126 *Stormy Breezes*, 61127 *The Birds are Singing* (Duet with Turgarino), 61128 *The Handkerchief*, 61129 *Lucia—Mad Scene*, 61130 *Perle du Bresil*, 61131 *Ave Maria* (Gounod), 61132 *Cradle Song* (Napravnik), 61133 *Fateful Moment* (Tschaikowsky), 61134 *Freischütz—Annie's Air*, 61135 *In Silence* (Duet with Turgarino), 61136 *Pique Dame* (Duet with Turgarino), 61137 *Doubt* (Duet with Turgarino), 61138 *Traviata* (Duet with Davidow), 61139 *Jocelyn—Berceuse*, 61140 *O Sing to Me* (Dlusski), 61141 *Rigoletto—Caro Nome*, 61142 *Russian Folk Song* (Duet with Turgarino), 61143 *Sea Gull's Cry* (Duet with Turgarino), 61144 *Serenade* (Gounod) (same recording as 91037), 61178 *Traviata—Addio del passato*, 61179 *Demon—The Night is Calm*, 61181 *Let Joy Abide* (Trojansky).

OVERTONES

■ The record news from Europe this month is naturally very limited. The latest supplement of the leading English company, His Master's Voice, bears a picture of King George VI seated before a microphone. Beneath the picture is the caption, "The King's Message to his People." From neither France nor Germany have we received record supplements.

Readers of our famous contemporary *The Gramophone* will be glad to know that the publication will carry on. Our best wishes for its success are extended. "It is our intention to continue publishing *The Gramophone* each month," says an announcement in the October issue, "but owing to the transport delay and the likelihood of paper control there may be difficulty in obtaining copies."

Schirmer New Recording

G. Schirmer, Inc., the New York music publishers, have gone into the record business. Among artists signed to record for the Schirmer label are Harold Bauer, the pianist; Lanny Ross, tenor; and Rudolf Friml, composer-pianist.

The first of a series of records to be made by Lanny Ross contains *The Lamp Is Low* and *Over the Rainbow* from the *Wizard of Oz* (disc No. 502). Ross sings these two songs to the accompaniment of strings under the direction of V. Selinsky. Admirers of this well-known radio singer will not be disappointed with his first record; he is in good voice and the recording reflects his accomplishments faithfully. *The Lamp Is Low* is the song that uses for its best material part of Ravel's tender *Pavane*; one would not know this here as the label gives no credit to the French composer.

U. S. Record Corp.

A new record company has entered the field. It is called the United States Record Corporation. The policy of the new company apparently follows along the line of domestic Decca, for it is not only sponsoring popular records under the "Varsity" label at 35c, but some foreign repressings of classical selections under the "Royale" label at 75c and \$1.00. Most of the latter seem to have emanated from the former German Artiphone and Ultraphone companies, both of which have been out of the record business, if we are correctly informed, for nearly a decade. Several old favorites, which in their time were highly regarded by record buyers, show up again under the Royale label. These include two 10-inch discs that Marian Anderson made long before she became a Red Seal artist, and the two-disc recording of Schönberg's arrangement for orchestra of Bach's *Prelude and Fugue in E flat*, as played by the Bach Philharmonic Society (originally the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra), under the direction of Erich Kleiber. The Anderson discs contain her versions of *O mio Fernando* from *La Favorita*,

Adieu forêts from Tschaikowsky's ("Carafa's" in the present repressing) *Jeanne d'Arc*, and *Amour! viens aider* (sung in English) from *Samson and Delilah*. There is a substantial list of standard overtures made with the Berlin Philharmonic, which organization is given various names on the labels.

Wise With Victor

Mr. Charles O'Connell, RCA Victor's director of classical artists and repertoire, announces that Mr. Ronald Wise, who is widely known in the field of recorded classical music, has been appointed his assistant. He will aid Mr. O'Connell in selecting the artists and the music to be recorded and will also help arrange and supervise the recordings. Mr. Wise has been in the record field for over 20 years. To him, records and recording have been both a hobby and a career. He joined the Victor company in 1928 as field sales representative, remaining in this position until 1936. Later he became director of classical recording and repertoire for the Columbia company, a post he held until recently.

Gorin Records Moussorgsky

This past month, in the midst of an Eastern concert tour, Igor Gorin, the baritone, paused at the Victor laboratories to record in English Moussorgsky's *Children's Songs*. These records will be released in the near future. Mr. Gorin informs us that he has also recorded a Moussorgsky Anniversary Album for Victor, containing the dramatic *Songs and Dances of Death* and four other songs by the composer: *After the Battle*, *To the Little Star*, *Revery of the Young Peasant*, and *The Banks of the Don*.

* * *

It is reported that as a tribute to Paderewski, a recording of his piano concerto will be issued in the near future, played by Sanromá and the Boston "Pops".

* * *

There is a consistent and recurrent rumor in the record world that the manufacturers of a well-known and popular radio set are going into the record business. It is said that they will sponsor "hill-and-dale" recordings and will put out a high-fidelity set especially designed to reproduce the unusually wide range of frequencies that can be obtained in the hill-and-dale recording.

* * *

Roland Hayes, the Negro tenor, recently signed an exclusive contract with the Columbia Record Corporation. It is rumored that Columbia in the near future will announce

exclusive contracts with several leading American orchestras.

EUROPEAN RECORD RELEASES

England

- BEETHOVEN: *Leonora Overture* No. 1; B. B. C. Orchestra, direction Arturo Toscanini. H.M.V. DB3846.
- BOCCHERINI: (orch. Francaix): *Scuola di Ballo*; London Philharmonic Orch., direction Dorati. Columbia DX944/45.
- BRIDGE: *Suite*; Boyd Neel String Orch. Decca X250/2.
- BRITTEN: *Simple Symphony*; and BACH (arr. Nicholson): *Fugue in A minor*; Boyd Neel Orchestra. Decca X245/7.
- LISZT: *Ricordanza*, No. 9 of the 12 *Transcendental Studies*; played by Egon Petri. Columbia LX846.
- MOZART: *Minuets*, K. 176; Symphony Orch., dir. Fendler. Oiseau-Lyre 86/87.
- MOZART: *Haffner Symphony*, K. 385; Beecham and London Philharmonic Orch. Columbia LX851/3.
- SIBELIUS: *Romance*, Op. 24, No. 9; and WAGNER-LISZT: *Spinning Song*; Eileen Joyce. Parlophone E11424.
- VERDI: *Il Trovatore* - *Ah si, ben mio*, and *Di quella pira*, sung by Jussi Björling with orch. H.M.V. DA1701.
- WAGNER: *Lohengrin* - *Love Duet*; sung by Tiana Lemnitz and Torsten Ralf. H.M.V. DB4667.
- THE KING TO HIS PEOPLES. A record of His Majesty's Message broadcast from Buckingham Palace, Sept. 3rd, 1939. H.M.V. (Profits from the sale of this record will be devoted to a charity to be nominated by His Majesty.)

The Gramophone

Edited by

COMPTON MACKENZIE and
CHRISTOPHER STONE

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- contains literary contributions, biographies, translations and technical articles.

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EDITORIAL NOTES

■ The lists of records grow more exciting monthly. Unfamiliar works never before recorded and familiar ones re-recorded under improved conditions provide the questing record collector with continued thrills. Never before in the history of the phonograph has the output of records been more rewarding or more richly varied. Competition has been called the soul of business, and now that it has entered the field of "classical" recorded music (it has long been active and alive in the popular field), it is serving recorded music faithfully and well.

The record buyer's interest is aroused in two ways: by well-known music or by music that is relatively or completely unknown. The work of artists for whom there is wide admiration and respect can also be taken into consideration. However, it has become increasingly evident in recent years that the old idea, which dominated the record industry for so many years, that big names can carry any music is no longer to be relied upon. To cite examples would not be wholly fair, but it may be said that even the greatest names on records have failed upon more than one occasion to engage wide public interest for some of their recording ventures.

Because a musician is a favorite performer does not necessarily mean that all his musical efforts will attain the same level of desirability. It is the inviolable duty of the reviewer to point this out, although it may often be a disappointment to an ardent admirer of an artist. Yet, as an ardent admirer, he should be willing to allow for the failures of his favorite. Idolatry is a dangerous pursuit; it frequently dulls our judgements, and in the long run it leaves us without universality of appreciation.

The new lists of records impose a large task upon the reviewer. Yet it is his duty to endeavor always to be the torch bearer; to call attention to treasureable things, and to point the way so that those who follow him may avoid venturing their hard-earned money upon records that are, for one reason or another, unworthy.

The reviewer, of course, may not always be right, and it would be foolish to assume that he always expects to be. Like the record buyer, he may have his preferences. The pro-

per attitude in this respect has been so well expressed by the English writer Sidney Grew that we take the liberty of reproducing his remarks: "We retain our individuality. We guard against the superficial excitement that arises out of entertaining novelties. We do not live in obedience to the text-books, or follow blindly the warmest or the coldest critic we know. We make standards for ourselves, and renew or re-adjust them as we feel it necessary. Some of the things that are professionally exalted we leave alone. And some of the things that are debased and rejected we take to our hearts. But we like to have at hand all other criticisms passed on the music and the performance now under consideration. For then we are both pleased and humiliated—pleased to find confirmation of our views, humiliated to find that some detail which has charmed another we ourselves entirely missed. And such a sly nudge in the sides of our pride is itself a pleasure, since it affords instruction and makes for expansion and growth.

"As we have our favorite performers, so we have our favorite reviewers. The good reviewer should be a determined fellow. He should be vigilant and careful to assist you and to guard you against error. He should not be content with simply indicating the good or the bad in the month's provision of records, but must prove his case, so that you shall know the whys of his actions, and so be fit to profit fully by them. He should be your guide, both faithful and patient. He should lead you into the right atmosphere, and make your sight keen. He should be your favorite reviewer because he is not satisfied to deliver a pontifical Yea or Nay, but instead because he chats reasonably with you."

It has been said that perhaps the happiest music lover is he who discovers his treasures by accident. It may be so. The late Philip Heseltine has pointed out that "the average music lover does not approach music by the high road of history, still less by that of technical knowledge. His early experiences of music are largely fortuitous. To him, music is, as it were, a strange element, into which he is plunged from time to time. Then, one day, he will experience something akin to an initiation. He will hear some work to which his whole being seems to respond; and from that day he will cease to be content with such music as chance occasions may offer him." And from that day, he will look around for guidance, and his interest in the reviewer will be established. And after a time he will find that the honest reviewer is his friend, the

friend that guides him "into the right atmosphere and makes his sight keen".

* * *

As soon as the war broke out we wrote many of our English musical friends. From some we have had replies. From others, silence.

Among those to whom we wrote were Neville d'Esterre, whose articles from time to time have delighted our readers, A. R. Anderson, the critic on *The Gramophone*, Compton Mackenzie, its editor, Cecil L. Pollard, its secretary, and Donald Aldous.

Mr. d'Esterre, who has been preparing some articles for us, writes in part: "I have had not a moment to spare for writing this last month (September). We are at war, but here, with no visible sign of it, it seems utterly unreal. Three miles away are A-A guns and searchlights. . . there is an uncomfortable feeling that something is going to happen. . ."

Mr. Mackenzie has not written us. From his editorial in the October *Gramophone*, we can well believe he has had his troubles. His interest in recorded music is apparently keener than ever. He says in part: "We may expect a number of light records, many of which will be wanted for the entertainment of our soldiers, sailors, and airmen. It will be our business to criticize these with extreme care. . . acting as guides for those at home who want to provide the best for those absent. During this winter I shall myself be on the Island of Barra where I shall make it my business to dig up as much buried treasure as possible from my many records and write about them for our readers. We are not at the mercy of novelty. We have the rich storehouse of existing records to draw upon . . . Please remember the fate of the artists in a time like this. Many of them will be depending entirely on the encouragement you gramophone users give them. . . I have confidence in the record companies, and we may look to them and to the publishers of books to preserve the sanity of the nation." With others in England, Mr. Mackenzie attacks the British Broadcasting Company; whether justifiably or not we are not near enough at hand to pass judgment.

Mr. Pollard writes: "You will be pleased to note that we intend to continue publishing as long as we get the required support. At the time of writing we have a fairly solid list of subscribers and it would seem that the trade are prepared to help us." It is heartening to note that, despite the unfortunate times in England, efforts are being made to keep alive the production of art products.

SWING MUSIC NOTES

ENZO ARCHETTI

■ In the last few years American music has been receiving an unusual amount of attention—and interest. Just what is meant by "American" music is still a bit vague—unless we mean jazz, which is, of course, thoroughly and unmistakably American. But jazz is rather taken for granted now, and there seems to be a general striving for something else—something that will establish a "style", a quality that will make American music American and not just a carbon copy of something European. To achieve this end, many organizations have conducted competitions: symphony orchestras, radio companies, recording companies, opera houses, and, of course, generous individuals. All these efforts have not been fruitless. Many works of genuine interest have been played in public or broadcast, though it can hardly be said that anything world-shaking has been produced. But it cannot be denied that all these efforts have aroused a certain amount of general interest. They have also proved that American composers are thinking along new, individual lines.

The latest move to encourage American composers to express themselves individually comes from the Maxwell House Coffee Company, which has inaugurated a competition with an original twist on its "Good News of 1940" Program (Thursdays, at 9:00 P. M., WEAF). Each week Maxwell House names a popular American composer and commissions him to write a work to be performed on the air, on that program, five weeks thence. The novel twist lies in the fact that the work is to be patterned after a recognized classic. A certain well known short work, which has been established as a masterpiece in its own field, is played and then an American composer is named to write an American work along similar lines in the chosen composer's recognized style. For instance, Strauss' *Blue Danube* was played and then Peter De Rose was named and commissioned to write an American waltz which will have the same immortal qualities (it is hoped) as its model. All this rates mention in this column because Duke Ellington is one of the American composers

named to write an original work for Maxwell. His model is Brahms *Wiegenlied* and his assignment is to write an American lullaby. It is scheduled to be heard towards the end of November. Other composers thus far named are Jerome Kern, Louis Alter, and Dana Suesse.

With the appearance on the market of the new Columbia popular record with its very attractive red label and still more attractive lower price, a new radio program was launched to support it. Each Friday at 10.00 P. M. "Young Man with a Band" is aired over WABC. Each program features one of the many fine bands on the Columbia roster. The band plays some of its best numbers (usually some recently recorded), a portion of the leader's life story is dramatized during a short biographical sketch and then as a novelty a member of the audience (the broadcast is from one of Columbia's playhouses) is chosen by lot to record a number with the band then and there (if he can sing or play some instrument) and the record is given to the chosen one as a souvenir.

John Hammond has all ten fingers in this particular pie and it cannot be denied that he has produced one of the most interesting programs of its type on the air today. So far only swing bands have been aired but sweet bands are slated for future programs.

Dorothy Baker's popular book *Young Man With A Horn*, which was based on the life of Bix Biederbecke, has been dramatized and is being prepared as a play for Broadway. Vinton Freedley has the unenviable task of assembling a cast for it. To find actors who can play instruments is the problem. It would be easier to teach musicians to act. Eddie Condon seems to be a likely choice because he looks enough like Bix to pass for him, but he happens to be a guitarist, not a trumpet player, and he has never acted on the legitimate stage. What to do?

Among the records we have for review this month, there are some from the newest entrant in the recording field: Solo-Art. It makes an auspicious entrance with four discs of a highly specialized form of jazz, the boogie-woogie, by two of its best known exponents—Albert Ammons and Pete Johnson.

Bass Goin' Crazy (Ammons)

Monday Struggle (Ammons)

Piano solos by Albert Ammons. Solo-Art 12000; ten inch; price \$1.00.

Boogie Woogie (Pine-Top Smith)

Mecca Flat Blues (Blythe-Robinson)

Piano solos by Albert Ammons. Solo-Art 12001; ten inch; price \$1.00.

Pete's Blues (Johnson)

Let 'Em Jump (Johnson)

Piano solos by Pete Johnson. Solo-Art 12005; ten inch; price \$1.00.

Buss Robinson Blues (Johnson)

B. and O. Blues (Johnson)

Piano solo by Pete Johnson. Solo-Art 12006; ten inch; price \$1.00.

The boogie-woogie is best described as a blues played in fast tempo by the right hand against an emphatic and repetitious bass figure played by the left hand. Its creation has been credited to Pine-Top Smith, whose own *Boogie-Woogie* is considered a classic in jazz. Since then, several pianists took up the torch, notably Jim Yancey and Crippled Clarence Lofton. Later came Meade "Lux" Lewis. Today Lewis, Albert Ammons, and Pete Johnson are considered the greatest exponents of that particular style of playing. These first Solo-Art releases are in reality a tribute to the Boogie-Woogie.

To understand this form of jazz better, it is recommended that *Mecca Flat* and *Pete's Blues* be played first. Both are slow numbers which reveal the real characteristics. These should then be followed by *Monday Struggle* and *Buss Robinson Blues* and the boogie-woogie will immediately become quite clear and logical. As an introduction to a specialized form of jazz, nothing better could be recommended than these four discs.

As recordings, the Pete Johnson discs are very much better than the others. Since they are later recordings, this is easily understandable. The Ammons discs were part of a first batch made by Solo-Art and Solo-Art admits their inferiority as recordings but considers them too important as discs to be withheld from collectors. Others, by Meade "Lux" Lewis, made at the same session as the Ammons, had more serious faults and will not be generally released but they will be available on special order to collectors.

Incidentally, *Bass Goin' Crazy* is boogie-woogie with a new twist: the right and left hand playing is reversed. The effect is quite startling.

The next releases by Solo-Art will be further examples of the boogie-woogie by the "daddies" of the style, Jim Yancey and Crippled Clarence Lofton.

Blues for Tommy (In Memory of Tommy Ladnier)

Basin Street Blues (Spencer Williams) played by the J. C. Higginbotham Quintet. Blue Note No. 7; 12-inch; price \$1.50.

(This record and several new Hot Record Society discs will be reviewed next month).

RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS

ORCHESTRA

AMERICAN MUSIC FOR ORCHESTRA - CHADWICK: *Jubilee* (from *Symphonic Sketches*) (disc 15656; MACDOWELL: *Dirge* (from *Indian Suite, Op. 48*) (disc 15657); PAINE: *Prelude to Oedipus Tyrannus, Op. 35* (disc 15658); and KENNAN: *Night Soliloquy*, and GRIFFES: *The White Peacock* (disc 15659); played by the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Howard Hanson. Victor set M-608, four discs, price \$8.00.

■ This is a wholly admirable album, and although it cannot be said that any of the music is overwhelmingly vital, neither can it be said that it is not worthwhile and interesting from more than one aspect. One can only agree with Mr. O'Connell's observation that it is surprising that music of this kind has been neglected for so long; we assume he means by the recording companies. It is to be hoped that his further observation, that Mr. Hanson's recent performances of all these works with the NBC Symphony and the issuance of these records will cause "the appearance on American symphony programs of these and other native American works which have too long lain idle and unfamiliar in orchestra libraries," will prove true. The value of a pioneering spirit in recording companies cannot be overestimated, and one can only encourage their efforts along these lines.

It is fitting that Howard Hanson, who has done so much to encourage and promote interest in American music, should have been chosen to record such works as these. And also that that splendid American organization, the Eastman-Rochester Symphony, should have been the orchestra used. For some time past we have admired its performances over the air; the present recordings not only sustain our admiration but increase our respect for this body of American players. Under Mr. Hanson's alert and enthusiastic direction, it turns in fine performances of each of the works.

Chadwick has long held our esteem. At the turn of the century he was justly regarded as one of our leading composers, and his music provided stimulus and incentive to many later

writers. True, *Jubilee* is not one of his best works, but it has both animation and assurance. In spirit it is like Dvorak's *Carnaval Overture*, but this does not mean that it is imitative of that score.

The MacDowell composition is one of the most moving lamentations of its kind ever written. A complete discussion of it will be found in our review of the Columbia set of the complete *Indian Suite* (September issue). It is the highlight of the work, and represents a valuable contribution to American music based upon national idioms. Mr. Hanson's reading is less compelling than Mr. Barlow's; this may be the result of recording which does not bring out the instrumental contrasts as richly or poignantly as does the Columbia recording.

John Knowles Paine was definitely one of the leaders in American musical development. From 1875 to his death in 1906 he occupied the post of musical director at Harvard. Greatly admired as an organist, he composed much sacred as well as secular music. His works at first showed his admiration and study of the classical school, but later he was influenced by the romantics and became, as the annotator says here, one of the foremost representatives of 19th-century romanticism in this country. The present work, reflecting both classic and romantic tendencies, was written as an introduction to a performance of Sophocles' tragedy given at Harvard in 1881.

Kent Kennan is a talented young American composer who recently was awarded the *Prix de Rome*. His *Night Soliloquy*, written for flute and strings, is, in our estimation, the best thing in the album; a work of inspiration and beauty.

Griffes' *The White Peacock* was one of four piano pieces published under the title of *Roman Sketches*. The present orchestration was made by the composer. Barlow and the Columbia Broadcasting Symphony recently issued a recording of this composition which brought out its intimate atmospheric qualities better than they are revealed here. The superb oboe playing of Mitchell Miller in the Barlow recording is hardly matched here, nor is the contrast of wood wind and string instruments as effectively brought out. But the fact that this composition is played on one

side of 12-inch disc, instead of two sides of a 10-inch one, is very much in its favor; for this is not music that sustains itself too well when broken up in the recording.

BRAHMS: *Symphony No. 1 in C minor, Op. 68*; played by the London Symphony Orchestra, direction of Felix Weingartner. Columbia set M-833, five discs, price \$7.50.

■ Weingartner has enjoyed an extraordinary success in his interpretation of the Brahms symphonies, and he is entitled to take a rightful pride in his feeling for and projection of these works. It has been observed that musicians reach a time when the playing of Brahms gives them the highest pleasure their art can afford. This is the feeling that is conveyed to me in the several Weingartner performances that have been recorded in the past year.

It has been observed that Brahms, in his music, and especially in this work "brings back music to the moral heights on which it had lived with Beethoven, but from which the later romantic movement had withdrawn it... he restored the heroic tone, which is a part of classicism in music." It is this liberation from the heavy cloak of romanticism for which Brahms undoubtedly strove, and yet he never entirely disentangled himself. Rightfully he may be termed a classic-romantic; this is particularly noticeable in his symphonies. Weingartner does not emphasize the romantic elements as much as Bruno Walter does. Yet, since these elements are there, there may be some who will contend that they should be brought out to a greater degree than here. But this is a matter of taste after all.

Weingartner's shaping of the introduction is particularly impressive. He keeps the music moving, and though this allows for less contrast between the opening section and the allegro proper, it is, in my way of thinking, all to the good. There is a fine forwardness to the playing of the movement proper, and a splendid clarification of detail. The slow movement is played with restraint, but there is warmth and benevolence to the interpretation which is entirely appropriate.

In the allegretto, which does duty as a scherzo, Weingartner attains a buoyancy and lightness which enhances the geniality and glow of the music. Perhaps the pace may be too fast for some; to me it seemed appropriate. At the beginning of the finale the conductor does not over-emphasize the drama. The *pizzicati* are well conveyed in the recording (there was a time when these were completely lost). With the beginning of the hymnal sec-

tion (opening side 2) Weingartner saliently brings out the strength, fully conveying the bite of the music and its onward surge. Here we have superb recording, with an unusual emphasis on the bass for these times. The finale is gloriously full-bodied and stirring.

The reproduction is rich and vital, offering an amazing clarification of linear construction and tonal color over the old Weingartner set. Although the London Symphony plays with fine virtuosity, there is more than one suggestion that its various sections do not come up to the best of our American orchestras. This is particularly noticeable in the playing of the horns in the finale.

The notes on this set seem to me sophomoric, and hardly what one might expect from a concern of the standing of Columbia.

CHAVEZ: *Sinfonia India* (3 sides); *Sinfonia de Antigona* (3 sides); and BUXTEHUDE (arr. Chavez): *Chaconne in E minor*; played by the Symphony Orchestra of Mexico, conducted by Carlos Chavez. Victor set M-503, four discs, price \$6.50.

■ In their special list "Music for the Connoisseur", Victor pays tribute to the neighboring Republic of Mexico, and at the same time auspiciously honors its talented composer and conductor Carlos Chavez. Chavez has made appearances in recent years with several of our leading American orchestras, and has played all of the works in this album. The thorough grounding in the classics that this conductor is said to have had in his early student days is evidenced here in his arrangement of the Buxtehude *Chaconne* and in his *Sinfonia de Antigona*. His *Sinfonia India* is a score, which while making use of the classical sonata form, owes its inspiration to melodies of the Seri Indians of Sonora.

The two symphonies are music of deftly planned effects. Since such music if long drawn out might very well cease to sustain the listener's interest, Chavez has been wise in writing these works in the one-movement symphony form. He is justified in his contention that the *Antigona* is a symphony, not a symphonic poem, since it is not based on a program; and the same may be said of the *India*. The character of *Antigona* is suggested in the music, "her self-confidence, defiance, heroism, and martyrdom", but not, as the composer admits, wholly successfully. The work is based on incidental music which Chavez composed in 1932 for a performance in Mexico City of Cocteau's version of *Sophocles*, the mood only of which is meant to be conveyed.

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American Music For Orchestra *by the Eastman-Rochester Symphony Orchestra* *Howard Hanson, Conductor*

The selections in this fascinating album are some of those responsible for the enormously growing interest in native American Music. Extensive in time, from the past to the immediate present, varied in color and mood, this is music marked by the vitality and intensity of a young nation. The orchestra which records this album was specially organized and rehearsed. This is music that will add lustre and excitement to your record library. It includes:

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Prelude to "Oedipus Tyrannus" (John Knowles Paine, Opus 35)
Night Soliloquy (Kent Kennan)

The White Peacock (Charles Tomlinson Griffes). Album-608, 8 sides, with descriptive booklet, \$8.00.

Divertimento No. 10, in F Major, **for Strings and Two Horns (Mozart)**

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Chavez tells us that he has here "made use of rhythmic, harmonic, and melodic elements essential to the early theory of Greek music." Thus we note it is music of definitely planned effects. There is an animal vigor and an elemental energy to the music, which is brought out not only by concise melodic effects but also by unusual scoring.

Sinfonia India is music of a national idiom. Although the melodies are from authentic Indian sources, one suspects that they emanate in part from Spanish influences. The scoring in this makes use of some unusual percussion instruments, such as Indian drums, water gourd, rasps and rattles. The rhythmic effects obtained through the use of these instruments is particularly fascinating during the second part of the recording, especially when heard through the wailing strings.

Buxtehude's *Chaconne*, according to Schweitzer, is said to have inspired Bach to write his famous organ *Passacaglia*. The forms are similar, but the Buxtehude work is less imposing dramatically than Bach's which is a far more elaborate composition. It is an effective work, however, and has been played before in the concert hall in an orchestral arrangement. The purist decries this sort of thing, but it can be said that an organ work lends itself more naturally to orchestration than works conceived for a thinner medium. Chavez can hardly be accused of over-scoring the Buxtehude composition, and most people will agree with the present writer that what he has done is effective.

The playing of these three works has been achieved with no small degree of success. The Symphony Orchestra of Mexico, however, can hardly be compared to any of our foremost American organizations. As heard here, it is a comparatively young orchestra, having been formed in 1928 by Chavez. Although it is undeniably a better organization than it was in its beginning and has continuously improved under the composer-conductor's direction since he first became associated with it, there is more than one indication that there is room for further improvement. The two symphonies are played better than the Buxtehude work. The recording is comparable to Victor's best, and there are no troublesome dynamic amplitudes in the reproduction.

GOLDMARK: *Rustic Wedding Symphony*, Op. 26; played by Columbia Broadcasting Symphony conducted by Howard Barlow. Columbia set M-85, five discs, price \$7.50.

■ Nearly a decade ago, Victor brought out in its educational list a recording of this work played by the Vienna Philharmonic, under the direction of Robert Heger. Record buyers in recent years have been clamoring for a new version, so this recording, like that of the Franck *Eolides* last month, may be said to fulfill a definite need.

Some folks feel that they have outgrown this sort of music. It lies very close to Rubinstein, and Rubinstein no longer seems popular in the concert hall. But for that matter neither is Goldmark. Once in a while one hears a performance of his *In Springtime Overture* and the *Violin Concerto in A minor*, but it has been a long time since we have had performances of his works hereabouts.

Actually this work is not a symphony, but a symphonic suite. And the term Rustic is quite as ambiguous as the term Country by which it has been variously known. In the original German it is called *Die ländliche Hochzeit*, and the meaning, although implying either of the above terms, does not at the same time mean a Peasant Wedding. One writer has rather humorously pointed this out by stating that a peasant does not own a garden (referring of course to the fourth section of the work which is labelled *In the Garden*), there being a special mark of social significance which Goldmark is said to have observed. The impression gained is that it is the wedding of country gentry. But all this is not of great importance, for the work has no specific program other than indicated in the titles to its five movements. These are: 1. *Wedding March* - Theme and Variations, 2. *Bridal Song*, 3. *Serenade*, 4. *In the Garden*, 5. *Dance - finale*.

Goldmark is perhaps best known by his opera *The Queen of Sheba*. Those who have travelled in Europe have probably at some time or the other heard a performance of this work, which is richly opulent in its scoring and dramatically effective. The opera with its flavor of the Oriental and the exotic is far removed from this symphony. Here the mood is simple and naive. As one writer has said, the work is remote from the intricacies of modern harmony and orchestration. For those who like friendly melodies simply harmonized, and a mood of gentle genial elation, this work will appeal. There is no real climax to the music at any time; even the build-up in the middle section of the fourth movement with its rush of descending strings lacks a telling note. The *Serenade* is cleverly devised with a nice interplay of motives and a quaint touch of humor. The whole work suggests

the influence of folk music. Particularly is this true of the rollicking dance finale, where there is a sturdy forwardness to the music. Its fugal opening and its slightly dissonant chords heard near the middle seem almost daring after what has gone before. There is an interlude again utilizing the main melody of the garden scene and then the dance returns. The work ends on a note of merry-making.

Mr. Barlow does full justice to the score, avoiding any undue emphasis of its sentiment. And the recording shows an advancement over the earlier Haydn one.

* * *

HINDEMITH: *Trauermusik* (Funeral Music); played by Paul Hindemith (viola) with string orchestra conducted by Bruno Reibold. Victor disc 15643, price \$2.00.

■ The structural strength of Hindemith's music is its most admirable feature. His writing is also distinguished for its freedom from unessential ornament and for unswerving linear development.

This work was written on the occasion of the funeral of George V of England. Hindemith is said to have had a strong admiration for this monarch. It is divided into four parts: (1) Lento (occupying the first side of the disc), (2) Ruhig bewegt, (3) Lebhaft, (4) Choral. The first and last sections are the longest parts, the two middle movements being almost fragmentary.

One is immediately struck by the deeply moving quality of the music. It is filled with sorrow, but not with pity or maudlin lamentation. The strength of its pathos is admirable, and the emotional sensibility of the final section, based on an old Lutheran chorale—*Vor deinen Thron tret ich hiermit*—creates a mood of rarely touching beauty.

The performance of this work is dominated by the solo instrument, which is played by Hindemith, who is an accomplished violist. The recording here is good, but the balance, because of the prominence given the viola part, may make it necessary for some to use a non-metallic needle for best results.

* * *

MOZART: *Divertimento No. 10 in F major* (for strings and two horns), K. 247; played by the Philadelphia Orchestra, direction Eugene Ormandy. Victor set M-603, two 10-inch discs, one 12-inch disc, price \$5.50.

■ Eric Blom remarks in his engaging book on Mozart (in the Master Musician Series published by Dutton) that in his divertimenti

Mozart was "often more diverting" in his scoring than in his symphonies. This is more than a mere pun, for such music as this was composed largely for entertainment purposes.

The present work is termed a *Sextet* by its publishers, but Mozart himself called it a *Divertimento* for six instruments. This does not necessarily mean that it was intended to be played by only six instruments; it is generally assumed that Mozart's pieces of this character were performed by as many strings as were available. The two horns are employed more for harmonic reinforcement than for any special instrumental effects. This *Divertimento* is in six movements, but Ormandy omits two—the first menuet and the succeeding adagio. In so doing he causes the work to take on the character of a small symphony. The four movements played are the opening allegro, the subsequent andante (which might not inappropriately have been called an Italian serenade), the second menuet, following the adagio in the score, and the final allegro assai, which is prefaced by a short andante.

Admirers of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Mr. Ormandy will find just cause to rejoice at this issue of an excellently recorded Mozart

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work from these artists. The conductor gives ample proof of his enjoyment of the work in his sturdy and exhilarating playing. His performance offers interesting contrast with the playing of a similar score, the *Divertimento in B flat*, K. 287, which Bruno Walter broadcast last year with the NBC Symphony, reduced for the occasion, and which Fiedler recorded with his Sinfonietta (Victor set M-434). Ormandy relates the work to a modern concert hall, while both Walter and Fiedler, using ensembles of lesser proportions, play the music as it might have been heard in Mozart's time.

It is interesting to know that both this work and the *B flat Divertimento* were written at Salzburg in the composer's twentieth year for the Countess Antonia Lodron, apparently for festal occasions.

SHUBERT: *Symphony No. 9 in C major*; played by the London Symphony Orchestra conducted by Bruno Walter. Victor set M-602, six discs, price \$9.00.

■ At last we have a reading of the famous symphony of "heavenly length" that does outstanding justice to its notable drama and poetry. There have been those who have argued for a condensation of this work, but it may well have been that they had neither the pleasure nor the profit of hearing a Bruno Walter conduct it. The symphony is constructed on a large scale, and, like the composer's final piano sonatas, it was created at white heat. One suspects that Schubert knew that his life was drawing to a close, and that he never would release all the melodies that were within him. He was incapable of the self-criticism that Beethoven imposed upon himself, but he had a gift for melody that his contemporary did not own. Notwithstanding all the repetitions in this work, there is nothing in it that one would willingly spare.

The romantic in Walter undoubtedly finds happy solace in this symphony. Though he does not exaggerate the sentiment of the lovely *andante con moto*, he does indulge in some curiously arbitrary rubati. These are also noticeable in the introduction and again in the scherzo. But the flow of the music is, on the whole, delightfully maintained, and the precision and buoyancy in the playing attest to the fastidious attention to detail that is characteristic of Walter.

—P. H. R.

IVANOVICI (Orchestrated by Waldtuefel): *Danube Waves - Waltz*; played by the Boston "Pops" Orchestra, dir. Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 12510, price \$1.50.

■ Almost every piano student in his first year takes a whack at this composition. It is best known in its piano form, but possibly was originally written for band. One must agree with the sponsors of this disc that Fiedler gives this hackneyed work new life. But Fiedler has a natural flare for waltzes, being by birth an Austrian. The influence of Johann Strauss evidently travelled, and the charm of the Danube river also, for Ivanovici was a Roumanian band inspector.

The recording here is good, offering no reproductive problems.

—P. C.

ROSSINI: *William Tell - Overture*; played by the NBC Symphony Orchestra, direction Arturo Toscanini. Victor set M-605, two 10-inch discs, price \$6.50.

■ Toscanini has long had a great admiration for Rossini, and in his performances of many of the composer's works he has shown us that music which often sounds empty and tawdry when badly played can be made to sound both colorful and vital when directed with artistic virtuosity. Admirers of the conductor will undoubtedly rejoice in this album, which is well recorded. However, we cannot help but think that the rejoicing would have been greater had the recording been made somewhere else than Studio 8H, from which the orchestra is broadcast.

There are three modern recordings of this overture: the present set, a more forcefully recorded one by Fiedler and the Boston "Pops", and Columbia's set made by Sir Thomas Beecham. Beecham and Toscanini present an interesting contrast in their approach to this music. The former interprets the work in the manner of a tone poem in which the contrasts are marked but not unduly emphasized, while Toscanini dramatizes the contrasts and thus makes the overture a *tour de force*. There is much to be said for both interpretations.

WAGNER: *The Rhinegold - Entrance of the Gods into Valhalla* and the *Rainbow Bridge*; played by the Victor Symphony Orchestra. Victor disc 36234, price \$1.00.

■ This performance may be less exciting and more restrained than many that have preceded it on records, but it is nonetheless an admirable one. The music is played with affection and obvious care for detail. The recording has spaciousness behind it, and the hammer-stroke of Donner is most realistically conveyed.

—P. G.

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SMITH: *Miniature Suite* (Freely transcribed by Harl McDonald) (3 sides); and BOYCE: *The Power of Music: Overture*; played by Arthur Fiedler's Sinfonietta. Victor set M-609, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ John Christopher Smith (1712-1795) was one of the outstanding followers of Handel—in fact he was a great friend of that master (who was largely responsible for the young man's musical education); and in Handel's last years, after blindness had overtaken him, Smith's relationship to him forms something of a parallel to that which in our own time existed between Eric Fenby and Frederick Delius. Naturally Smith's music bears many reminders of Handel, though on the evidence of the suite here recorded it is not without a charm of its own. There is nothing overwhelming here, but, especially in the slow movement, a good deal that is really delightful.

Perhaps it is unfair to judge the work historically from this recording, for the free hand of Dr. McDonald has been at work. We must take the work for what it is as recorded (as Smith-McDonald rather than as Smith) and, let us admit, it is not for the purists.

In the Boyce *Overture* we have a better standard of comparison, because of the set of Boyce *Symphonies* (perhaps more properly *Sinfonias* or *Overtures*) recorded a couple of years ago by Max Goberman for Timely. Here is a very different treatment than that which we have come to know in the Constant Lambert edition used for those records, and again, I am afraid, the purists will not be too well pleased.

Both playing and recording throughout the set are clean and alive.

—P. M.

VAUGHAN WILLIAMS: *Greensleeves-Fantasia*; and J. H. FOULDS: *Keltic Lament*; played by The Jacques Orchestra, dir. Reginald Jacques. Col. disc 69735-D, price \$1.50.

■ Lovers of Shakespeare will remember Act V of the *Merry Wives of Windsor*, where Falstaff, in great excitement, shouts "Let it thunder to the tune of Green Sleeves." The tune is a very early example of English folk music, making its first published appearance in 1584. Several versions have come down to us; Vaughan Williams has chosen the one with the modal quality emphasized by use of the lowered seventh. The arrangement is typical Vaughan Williams, characterized by complete sympathy, sensitivity, and an almost impressionistic approach to the beautiful melody. Some may prefer a simpler arrangement

of the quiet and mournful melody which Shakespeare and his contemporaries were so fond of quoting, but none can deny the intensity and depth of feeling of the present version.

The *Keltic Lament* is a simple and appealing melody of folk origin, simply and appealingly treated. More objective in style than the *Greensleeves*, it is scored and presented without the fervor of the latter. J. H. Foulds, however, has given us a gracious presentation of a lovely melody. This sincere and unostentatious disc is well worth having, and is heartily recommended. The recording is of excellent quality, and the orchestral balance is at all times praiseworthy.

—H. C. S.

CONCERTOS

BACH, J. C.: *Concerto in G major, Op. 7, No. 6*; played by Marguerite Roesgen-Champion, harpsichord, M. Bronschwak, violin; M. Perlmutter, violin, and Victor Pascal, cello. Two Victor ten-inch discs, Nos. 4441-42, price \$2.00.

■ Here is an altogether charming work which will come as a novelty to almost anyone. Although titled *Concerto*, and formally constructed as such, it is in reality chamber music, and has the historical interest of standing at the cross-roads where these two categories part. In this recording the work has been done in chamber music style, for the parts in the ensemble are all played quite properly by soloists, and the music has been kept within an intimate mood. Judged by any musical standards the work is a beautiful one. There are as usual three movements—*Allegro, Andante* and *Allegretto*, of which the second is particularly graceful and lovely, although in all of them the musical interest is well sustained. It should be mentioned that there are two or three short cuts in this recording.

Mme. Roesgen-Champion and her associates give an honest and unaffected performance of this ingratiating music. Perhaps, indeed, they have gone a little too far in their honesty, for the *Concerto* could stand something more of imagination and poetry, at least on the part of the harpsichordist. However, I suppose it is hardly fair to expect every performance to be a perfect one. I am sincerely happy to be able to make the acquaintance of so charming a *Concerto* presented as pleasantly as it is here. The recording is satisfactory.

—P. M.

CHAMBER MUSIC

BACH: *Sonata No. 3 in G minor* (viola da gamba and harpsichord); played by Janos Scholz and Ernst Victor Wolff. Columbia set X-147, two discs, price \$3.50.

■ Of the three sonatas that Bach wrote for gamba and harpsichord, the third, in G minor, is unquestionably the most vital and compelling. The fervor and power of the opening vivace are irrefutable. It is hard to resist the sweeping flow of this music, and its assurance is incontestable. There is a religious solemnity to the adagio which follows, but the finale returns to the vigor of the opening movement.

Scholz and Wolff give a splendid performance here. Their unflinching tonal sonority and rhythmic assurance give striking evidence of their comprehending musicianship. Never have I heard Wolff play with finer digital dexterity than in the difficult opening movement. In the slow movement the dignity of the phrasing might have profited by more subjective intensity; the playing of the two fast movements, however, could hardly be bettered. The recording is excellent.

Janos Scholz (who is the cellist of the Roth Quartet) has proved himself such an accomplished player on the viola da gamba in his recordings of the three Bach sonatas, that one hopes Columbia will record him in other works for the gamba. Scholz uses a modern bowing technique in his playing of this old instrument, claiming that a richer and more desirable tone is thereby attained for recording.

* * *

BEETHOVEN: *Trio No. 2 in G major, Op. 9, No. 1*; played by the Pasquier Trio. Col. set M-384, three discs, price \$5.00.

■ The influence of Haydn and Mozart may be noted in this work, yet the contrasts in the writing are unmistakably Beethovenian. Neither of the earlier masters, for example, would pass from geniality and suavity to brusqueness, as Beethoven does here in the first movement. The andante, marked "not too slow and with singing tone", is music of a solacing nature. The embellishments in the first violin part look backward, but the movement as a whole, with its expressive intensity, points forward to the later Beethoven. The annotator refers to the effectiveness of the "syncopation" in the adagio, but I have failed to find, either in the score or on the records, any displacement of the rhythm.

Musicraft has already given us an excel-

lent recording of this work, played by a capable group of young musicians especially assembled for the occasion. Though they brought an admirable spontaneity to their performance (observing the *con brio* marking in the opening allegro better than the Pasquiers do), they did not achieve the even balance or the suavity and polished phrasing of the Pasquiers. These three brothers are indeed most gifted musicians, as attested by the recordings they have made for Victor, Columbia and Musicraft. The balance and tonal quality of the recording is satisfactory in every way.

—P. H. R.

* * *

BEETHOVEN: *Variations on a theme by Mozart*; played by Lois Wann and Ferdinand Prior, oboes, and Engelbert Brenner, horn. Musicraft set 34, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50.

■ Musicraft takes particular pride in this release, and announces with a figurative twinkle that it has found a virtually unknown work of Beethoven. Most writers on this composer—and one would think they had by this time nearly exhausted their subject—have been entirely ignorant of the existence of these lit-

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the *Variations*. The work has been buried for years in the Berlin State Library, where it was discovered after the "complete" works of Beethoven had been published.

The principal novelty of the work is its delightful instrumentation, though it is likely that this very feature will keep it from frequent performance. Presumably it was written for some special occasion when two oboes and an English horn were available. Musically, when the novelty of the pure sound of these instruments in combination wears off, there is not much substance in the piece. It is a set of variations on *La ci darem la mano* from *Don Giovanni*—variations of the kind that Beethoven (and for that matter many of his contemporaries) could write by the yard, and in the long run it adds nothing to the pure and perfect beauty of Mozart's original melody. For anyone especially interested in Beethoveniana, of course, the set will be indispensable, for no matter how long they wait they will probably not get a better performance on records than Musicraft has captured for them. Mechanically the set is a definitely outstanding success.

CARILLO: *Preludio a Cristobal Colon*; played by the 13th Sound Ensemble of Havana, directed by Angel Reyes. Columbia disc, No. 735M, price \$1.25.

■ This disc will be readily recognized as a re-issue of one of the curiosities of recorded music. Carillo has been a leading theorist and experimentalist in split-tone music, and this example is conceived in quarter, eighth and sixteenth tones. I have known the recording for some years, and have had some pleasure from its strange effects. I may be wrong, but after listening to it as many times as I have, I still think of it as purely experimental music. I would, therefore, recommend it to the curious and to the student of modern music, but I would not want to be responsible for bringing it to the attention of the old-fashioned music lover. The tonal shifting, however, is not difficult to grasp in this music, and the recording still sounds clear and satisfactory.

Just what sort of a work *Cristobal Colon* may be I have not been able to find out. Perhaps it is an opera—if so some more of the music might provide another interesting novelty.

—P. M.

MOZART: *Divertimento No. 17 in D major*, K. 334; played by the Lener String Quartet with Aubrey and Dennis Brain (horns). Columbia set M-379, five discs, price \$7.50.

■ Columbia has previously issued four movements of this work in a performance for reduced orchestra, played by the estimable Hamilton Harty and the now-defunct Halle Orchestra (set M-207). Like Ormandy has done this month in the case of the *Divertimento* in F major, K. 247, Harty also excised two movements from the present *Divertimento* (an adagio and succeeding minuet), thus placing the work in the category of a small symphony. It must be said, after hearing the present performance by the Leners in its entirety, that there is much in favor of Harty's and Ormandy's procedure. Ernest Newman, writing in the London Sunday Times recently, on the occasion of a performance of the present work by the same group of musicians, spoke of how tedious a work like this can be when played in its entirety. "The long *Divertimento* is hardly the thing to hold the hearer's attention enchained," he wrote. "It contains, it is true, the well-known and charming Minuet, and Mozart would not be Mozart if he did not succeed in infusing something of his unique genius into some episodes or other of each of the six movements. But as a whole a modern listener finds the work rather tedious." A Manchester critic, writing of Harty's performance of this work with the Halle Orchestra some ten years ago, stated that "the orchestra sounded at its best in the Mozart *Divertimento*. . . there is much to say in defense of shortening this work which can be tedious in its entirety, since it is a work full of good things rather than of an essential unity."

As an ardent Mozartean, I might be expected by some to disagree with the above; but after listening to this whole set as set forth by the Leners I am inclined to agree. Harty has selected, as undoubtedly Ormandy did in his case, the essential sections of the work. Admitting that the adagio has charm, and that the second minuet with its boisterous Haydnesque qualities offers contrast, it is, with two trios and its necessary fourfold repetition of the minuet proper, much too long for its own good. There is some lovely writing for the solo violin in the first trio, but I fail to find the second trio interesting.

A tendency of the Leners to slide from tone to tone may give the impression of faulty pitch.

All this is not by way of knocking down the present performance. All the players are in their best form and the work is admirably projected. Perhaps it would be enjoyed better if not played in its entirety, but this, of course, is a matter for the individual to decide. The balance and tonal quality of the recording are excellently contrived.

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RAMEAU: *La Pantomime*; *L'Indiscrète* and *La Rameau*; played by Mmes. E. Ortman-Bach (1st violin), Dominique Blot (2nd violin), Claude Crussard (clavécin). Victor disc No. 12490, price \$1.50.

VIVALDI: (arr. Crussard): *Sonata in D minor*; played by Mlles. Dominique Blot (violin) and Claude Crussard (piano). Victor disc 12491, price \$1.50.

ROSENMUELLER: *Sonata in E minor*; played by Mmes. E. Ortman-Bach, Dominique Blot (violins), M. de Lacour (clavécin), Noelle Pierront (organ), and instrumental ensemble conducted by Mlle. Crussard. Victor disc 12489, price \$1.50.

MONTEVERDI: (1) *Maledetto*, (2) *Chieme d'oro* (arr. Crussard); and (1) SIGISMONDO D'INDIA: *Lagrime occhi miei* (Air), and (2) MONTEVERDI: *Ohimè dov'è il mio ben* (Madrigal); Maria Castellazi and Leila Ben Sedira with instrumental ensemble. Victor disc 15446, price \$1.50.

■ All of these discs were made by a French society of musicians known as the *Ars Rediviva* ("art restored to life"). This society is highly regarded in the musical world of France for its research, realization and performance of old music. The authenticity of their performances is backed by the fervor and assurance of the musicians, and their unmistakable admiration and enthusiasm for the music as evidenced here, is, in our estimation, irrefutably contagious.

Several months ago Victor released two records, made by Barrere, Salzedo and Britt, which contained in part two of Rameau's wholly delightful *Pièces de Clavécins en concert*. At the time, we mentioned that these pieces were originally devised for violin or flute, viola da gamba or second violin, and harpsichord. We also mentioned the present disc, which we have long owned and admired. The harpsichord lends a necessary bite or precision to the bass line of the music, although its function here, as we pointed out previously, is not merely that of the supporting bass instrument. Rameau's treatment of the harpsichord makes it as important as the other instruments in the trio. We find this a particularly worthwhile disc.

Vivaldi's sonatas were written originally for violin and figured bass, which was undoubtedly realized in his time on the harpsichord with a viola da gamba reinforcing the bass line. Today most of these sonatas (also known as suites) are played in an arrangement for violin and piano. The musical significance of Vivaldi has been testified to by Bach's interest in the Italian's music. Those who are familiar

with the sonatas recorded by Heifetz, Busch, and Milstein will find this genuinely lovely work a worthy companion.

The moving beauty of the Rosenmueller music will come as a surprise to many people. He is an unjustly neglected composer. A contemporary of Schütz, he is one of the important composers of the 17th century. Educated in Leipzig, he taught there in the famous Thomasschule. Around his thirty-sixth year (1655) he seems to have met with a temporary set-back, being imprisoned for a time for a moral offense of which he was only partly cleared. Fleeing from Germany he settled for twelve years in Venice. Here he composed a large number of works which have existed until recently only in manuscript. One composition, published in Venice, a *Sonata da camera* or Suite, has been included in Curt Sachs' fifth volume of the *Anthologie Sonore* as a valuable example of the late 17th-century orchestral suite. That disc can be obtained separately (No. 52b). The dispassionate yet touching beauty of the present work makes it a truly treasurable contribution to the record library. We are indeed indebted to Victor for the release of this fine performance and recording.

Lastly we have the three Monteverdi works and an Air by one of his younger contemporaries—Sigismondo d'India, who gained fame during the 16th century as director of chamber music to the Duke of Savoy. This is a companion disc for the Monteverdi set arranged and directed by Nadia Boulanger (Victor M-496). One selection here is duplicated in the album set—the Canzonetta for two sopranos, *Chieme d'oro* (Tresses of gold). The present performance, making use of two soprano voices and also of a harpsichord in the instrumental ensemble, realizes the composer's intentions, to our way of thinking, much better than the Boulanger version, which uses two tenors and a piano.

Monteverdi was not only one of the foremost composers of his time (he was a contemporary of Palestrina) but also one of the greatest of all times. The degree of emotional intensity he achieved must have marked him as a "modern" in his own day. His *Maledetto*, an Air for solo voice (beautifully sung here by Mme. Castellazi), is based on a particularly graceful ascending melody. The Air by d'India is a moving one (it is also finely sung by Mme. Castellazi). Its title, *Lagrime occhi miei* (Weep my eyes), explains its plaintive quality. It leads almost too quickly into the Monteverdi madrigal, *Ohimè dov'è il mio ben* (Alas, where is my beloved.) This is a

richly contrasted duet. It is too bad that Mme. Castelazzi's companion in the two duets has not a better voice. The recording of all four numbers has been excellently contrived.

* * *

VERACINI: (arr. J. Salmon) *Sonata in E minor*; played by Jacques Thibaud (violin) and Tasso Janopoulo (piano). Victor disc 15568, price \$2.00.

VITALI (arr. Charlier): *Chaconne*; played by Jacques Thibaud and Tasso Janopoulo. Victor disc 15465, price \$2.00.

■ Thibaud is justly famous for his performances of the works of old masters. It is a curious thing, however, that a musician of Thibaud's standing should use such a trumped-up version of the Vitali Chaconne as the Charlier arrangement. Charlier has apparently elaborated on Ferdinand David's original arrangement of this work, and since David in his day rather glorified the old sonatas and related them more or less to Mendelssohn, there can be very little of the original Vitali in the later version. Be that as it may, Thibaud plays here with his accustomed suavity and fastidious shaping of the music.

Vitali was a 17th-century Italian violinist and composer; Veracini was a younger contemporary of Vitali. He was regarded in his time as the greatest violinist in Europe. Some years ago Polydor issued a disc with a *Sonata in E minor* by Veracini played by Licco Amar (violin) and G. Ramin (harpsichord). It is a disc that we have long prized. In two movements it has a Ritornelle of rare expressive and dramatic intensity, and an allegro con fuoco which has power and sweep. The present sonata, in the same key, is less compelling. It is composed of three movements based on dance forms popular in the composer's time—a gigue, minuet, and gavotte. It is possible that the only thing that Salmon has done here in the way of arrangement is the realization of the figured bass of the original work. All three movements have charm and grace, although the Gigue, in our way of thinking, is too repetitious for its own good.

Thibaud recorded these two works all of eight years ago in Europe; six years ago we purchased the two discs in Italy. The recording of the *Chaconne* seems to be the same one we acquired at that time, but that of the Veracini is a newer recording that Thibaud evidently remade in Japan in 1936. There is an autograph on the disc and the added line "May 27, 1936, Tokyo." The recording is good in both cases, and quite satisfactory to us for the music at hand.

—P. H. R.

KEYBOARD

BACH: *Toccatas and Fugues* (Vol. 1)—*Toccatas and Fugues in D minor*, and *F major* and *Tocatta with two Fugues in E major*; played by Carl Weinrich on the "Praetorius" organ at the Westminster Choir College, Princeton, N. J., Musicraft set 36, four discs, price \$6.50.

■ In an especially festive and decorative album, Musicraft presents the first of two volumes devoted to the *Toccatas and Fugues* of Johann Sebastian Bach. The organist is, of course, Carl Weinrich, but this time the instrument is the "Praetorius" organ of the Westminster Choir College in Princeton. This organ, a recent acquisition, has been designed by Carl Weinrich and G. Donald Harrison according to the specifications of Michael Praetorius in his *Syntagma Musicum* (1619).

Musically the album is a mightily impressive one. Beginning with the famous *D minor Tocatta and Fugue*, Mr. Weinrich seems to challenge, with his brilliant though never overloaded performance, all comers to equal his playing of it. There will, of course, be some quarrel with his strict avoidance of undue dramatics, but surely no one can deny the vitality of his playing. It is not likely that we will ever hear an apparently easier performance. The same may be said of the spectacular *F major Tocatta*—a cruelly long and steady pull for any organist—its gentler chromatic *Fugue*, and finally the early *E major Tocatta* with its two *Fugues*.

In this set Musicraft surpasses even its own high standard of organ recording. Nothing more exciting or more convincing is likely to be done for many moons. The records are accompanied by a scholarly discussion of the *Tocatta* form in general, and of the Bach *Toccatas and Fugues* in particular, written by Dr. Gerhard Herz.

* * *

BACH, C. P. E.: *Sonata in A minor* (No. 1 from the *Württemberg Sonatas*) (3 sides), HANDEL: *Fantasia in A minor* (No. 6 from *Third Collection for the Harpsichord*); played by Yella Pessl, harpsichord. Victor set M-606, price \$4.50.

■ With this two-disc set Miss Pessl contributes the first recording of a C. P. E. Bach *Sonata* played on a harpsichord. One other complete *Sonata* by this celebrated son of the great Bach has been recorded in its entirety by Ernst Victor Wolff for Musicraft, but it

was played on a piano. I suppose it is justifiable to use either instrument in this music, for it belongs to the transitional period when the piano was just coming into use. Be that as it may, composers had certainly not yet lost the essential feeling for the harpsichord, and the piano was scarcely the instrument we know by that name today. Beyond question the *Sonata* which Miss Pessl plays for us here is most effective on her instrument. Happily, aside from the great historical interest which is attached to any sonata by the so-called "father" of the modern sonata form, this work will stand squarely on its own merits as a piece of music to be enjoyed. The first movement is a kind of drawn-out flourish, very much in the harpsichord style, the second is gallant and stately, and the third rousing and jolly.

As a filler Miss Pessl plays a Handel *Fantasia in A minor* (called *Lesson* in the Handel edition). This is a work of considerable dignity. It will be remembered that this artist recorded two other selections from the same collection for Columbia a couple of years ago. The playing here is characteristic of Miss Pessl's recent best, and the recording of her instrument is very fine.

* * *

BUSONI: *Sonatina* (*Ad usum infantis*); and MOZART-BUSONI: *Don Giovanni: Serenade*; played by Egon Petri, piano. Columbia disc, No. 59736D, price \$1.50.

■ The propaganda for Busoni has reached the record lists, although so far it is confined to the master's piano music. Egon Petri, one of Busoni's favorite pupils, has been the most active propagandist, and the case he presents is an eloquent one. It is a cause for some regret, however, that in the case of the *Sonatina* on this disc, he has duplicated the work of another Busoni pupil and equally enthusiastic champion—Michael Zadora.

The *Sonatina*, for the use of a child, is a work of simple and direct appeal. We may take it that the "child" for whom it was intended was a particularly talented one, for the music is too delicate and finely conceived to be handed out indiscriminately to young pupils or to insensitive hearers. It needs the playing of an artist like Petri, who understands its transparent contrapuntal texture.

A comparison of this new Columbia disc with the record of the *Sonatina* made by Zadora for the Friends of Recorded Music (disc 23) is a pleasant if rather difficult task, for both pianists are in the deepest sympathy with the music, and both are artists of high rank. There may perhaps be a greater warmth

in Petri's playing, and in the matter of recording he has fared somewhat better, although Zadora has not been badly treated. By more generously filling up the record sides Petri is able to give an encore. Personally, I would not be drawn to the Columbia record just by Busoni's transcription of the *Don Giovanni Serenata*, for it presents our composer in a less attractive light than does the *Sonatina*. Mozart's little gem is given a more elaborate setting than it needs.

—P. M.

* * *

DEBUSSY: *Preludes-Book II*; played by Walter Gieseking. Columbia set M-382, six 10-inch discs, price \$6.00.

■ Although he began the set in 1910, it was not until 1913 that Debussy finished the dozen Preludes that make up his second book. It is frankly admitted, even by ardent Debussyites, that some of the music is unequal and much is quite experimental. The Debussy here is not the Debussy of the *Images, Suite Bergamasque*, or *Pour le piano*, being more preoccupied with abstract problems and polytonal excercises. Perhaps the harmonic results are more interesting, but the musical values sometimes suffer, in my opinion, and there is an uneasy feeling that the composer was more concerned with certain chordal juxtapositions than true musical expression.

Of course, that is not true of all the Preludes in this book. Twelve in number, they are named (1) *Brouillards*, (2) *Feuilles mortes*, (3) *La puerta del vino*, (4) "*Les fées sont d'exquises danseuses*", (5) *Bruyères*, (6) "*General Lavine*"-*Eccentric*, (7) *La terrasse des audiences du clair de lune*, (8) *Ondine*, (9) *Hommage à S. Pickwick, Esq., P. P. M. P. C.*, (10) *Canope*, (11) *Les tierces alternées*, and (12) *Feux d'artifice*. This is the first complete recording of the set. Over ten years ago Franz Josef Hirt recorded *Feuilles mortes* and *La puerta del vino* for Polydor, Marius-François Gaillard played the *Pickwick* for Odeon, and there are several old recordings of the *Feux d'artifice*. More recently Copeland, in the album of piano music by Debussy (Victor set M-198), played Nos. 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10, and since has added a disc with No. 3 on it. Up to now there has been no previous recording of Nos. 1, 4, and 11.

Needless to say, the present set far surpasses all previous efforts. By now there is little to say about Gieseking and his Debussy; more than any pianist he has established a complete rapport with the composer, and his exquisite playing absolutely realizes the im-

pressionistic ideals of Debussy. The only other set worthy of comparison is the Copeland, and that is square-toed and rather brittle when set against this one. Neatness is not a virtue in the playing of Debussy, and Copeland not only is too well planned, but his use of the pedals nowhere approaches Gieseking's. Note the perfect legato in the descending figure of *La Terrasse*, and how it winds its way into the hazy depth of a chord that remain suspended above ground. Observe again the use of the sustaining pedal in *La puerta del vino*, where certain chords are held so that others pass through them like birds through a cloud.

The music of the Preludes encompasses every mood, and the pianist treats every one successfully. Not even Gieseking can make great music out of the *Brouillards* or the amorphous *Ondine*, where Debussy was working by formula, but one shudders to think of the results if an inferior pianist were at work. Nor are the works all essence and perfume; there is the greatest opportunity for virtuosity, and of this we are given a dazzling dose in the *Feux d'artifice* and the less pretentious but equally difficult *Les tierces alternées*. There even is caricature, in the *General Lavine* and *Pickwick* sketches. In the latter, the statement of Cortot that "it is impossible to conceive of a wittier musical expression than this" may be taken with a very large grain of salt. As if there ever were a Frenchman—Cortot and Debussy included—who could completely be in understanding and sympathy with Sam Pickwick!

Columbia has done excellent work in its reproduction of the piano tone, which is warm and singing or crisp and light as the occasion requires. There is very little surface noise. All lovers of Debussy should hasten to procure this set; all lovers of superb pianism should do likewise.

LEVITSKI: *Valse in A Major*, and *Arabesque Valsante*, played by Mischa Levitzki. Victor 10-inch disc 2008, price \$1.50.

■ Although popular as encores in the concert hall, this is the first time these attractive salon pieces appear on records. The two selections complement each other perfectly, the gay and sprightly *Valse* being followed by the more elegaic *Arabesque*. Superficially, the former may seem to be simply constructed, but the reverse is the case; listen to the inner voices throughout the whole. It may be the height of insult to criticize a work, played by the composer, but one could wish for a fuller use of the pedal, which would alleviate the somewhat finicky approach to the first section.

Otherwise both selections, of course, are crisply and neatly played. It is highly unimportant, but I report with glee that the usually infallible Levitzki slipped up on a note at the beginning of the coda of the *Valse*. The *Arabesque* is played in real salon style, and the music itself is a nostalgic throwback to the days of Henselt and Thalberg. Surface noises are down to a minimum, and the piano fidelity is excellent.

—H. C. S.

ARR. KELBERINE: *Song of the Volga Boatmen*, and *Deep River*; played by Jeanne Behrend and Alexander Kelberine, piano duo. Victor 10-inch disc 1999, price \$1.50.

■ This disc can be recommended to those who like transcriptions for two pianos of familiar works. The effects attained in both pieces are carefully calculated and the playing is in a similar vein. The piano tone is exceptionally good and most impressive; particularly is this so in the *Volga Boatmen*.

—P. G.

VOCAL

BRUCKNER: *Mass in E minor*; sung by the Aachen Cathedral Choir, with the wind players of the State Orchestra, conducted by T. B. Rehmann. Victor set M-596, six discs, price \$12.00.

■ The musical significance of Anton Bruckner rests largely upon two things—his symphonies and his masses. His symphonies are even today highly controversial, but his masses are seldom discussed—at least in this country—since so few people really know anything about them. It is surprising therefore that almost simultaneously two of the European companies should have released recordings of the second or *E minor Mass*. With laudable optimism Victor now brings out the HMV version, thus making it possible for anyone in the United States, where the work could have had no more than a few performances, to become familiar with what the Brucknerites consider a masterpiece. Let us hope that Victor will be rewarded, for it is on this sort of enterprise that the brightest future of the phonograph must depend.

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Let me confess that I am one of those who are making the acquaintance of this *Mass* through these recordings. And I am inclined to believe that the Brucknerites are right. Here is none of the formal inflation, few of the Wagnerian echoes, little of the trying naivete which we sometimes object to in his symphonies. The style suggests Beethoven rather than Wagner—in fact it has much of that feeling of reaching ever upward which characterises the *Missa Solemnis*. Also in the voice writing Bruckner here suggests Beethoven, for many passages are cruel to sing. It is the grandeur of his message rather than the limitations of his medium with which the composer is concerned. Harmonically and contrapuntally the *Mass* is full of striking effects—often quite overwhelming in their unexpectedness. The use of the accompanying wind choir is masterly, but so sparing for a good part of the *Mass* that long passages are sung actually *a cappella*. Perhaps there is a shade of Wagnerism after all, but if so it is the Wagnerism of *Parsifal*, the mystic seeking after truth as embodied in that work. But Bruckner was a simpler soul than Wagner: his mysticism is of a purer and less worldly sort. It may be that the *Mass* falls off somewhat in inspiration in the later movements, but I think it more likely that this suspicion rises actually out of the human impossibility of building higher than the level sustained in the *Kyrie*, the *Gloria*, and the *Credo*. Only Bach was able to accomplish such miracles as this.

While I have not had the opportunity of following the Telefunken recording with the score, I believe that some cuts have been made in it. I can, however, vouch for the completeness of the Victor set. In tonal quality the Hamburg Opera Chorus seems to me to be better than the Aachen Cathedral Choir (in which boys' voices are used) and the balance is generally a bit better. On the other hand there is a slightly greater clarity in the reproduction of the Victor set. That both performances should be so superlatively good in so many ways is remarkable enough when we consider the tremendous difficulties of the work. It seems to me that the preference should be given the Victor set because it is more easily obtainable in this country, and also because it is complete.

* * *

CHARPENTIER: *A Mules* (After *Impressions d'Italie*): sung by Jean Planel, tenor, with women's chorus and orchestra, conducted by the composer; and *Les Chevaux de Bois*; sung by Jean Planel, with orchestra con-

ducted by the composer. Columbia disc, No. P-69734D, price \$1.50.

■ Here is a treat for admirers of the composer of *Louise* and the *Impressions d'Italie*. The first of the songs is actually founded upon a movement of the *Impressions*, and the second is so much in the style of *Louise* that it might easily have been taken from it.

A Mules, it will be remembered, is the third movement of the *Italian Impressions*, and it has been made into a song by the composer himself. This is one of the rare instances where this sort of transcription is successful. The orchestra is retained as the setting for the voices, and Charpentier has found appropriate melodies on which to pronounce the words of Jules Mery's poem. The muleteers are supposed to sing of their hopeless love, and their song is interrupted from time to time by the voices of girls at the fountain. It all sounds very natural and very effective as presented here.

Chevaux de Bois is a setting of a Verlaine poem—the same one used by Debussy for the fourth of his *Ariettes oubliées*. The title would more properly be translated as *The Merry-go-round* than *Horse of Wood* as the label has it. The text is an ironical one, implying far more than it says about the carousel and its riders. Of course Charpentier has attempted none of the subtleties of the Debussy setting, but he has painted his picture with a sure hand. As hinted above, the song is as brilliant and as Parisian as *Louise* herself. The orchestration is masterly. Such a work is in the tradition of Duparc, although one can hardly imagine Duparc setting this particular poem to music.

Neither of these songs is recent: *A Mules* was first publicly performed in October, 1890, and *Chevaux de Bois* in August, 1893. Since they are here conducted by the composer, we may take the interpretations to be the definitive ones. M. Planel, as collectors know, has not a remarkable voice, but he is an unusually intelligent singer, and his part in the performances leaves little to be desired. The recording is very good.

* * *

EARLY AMERICAN BALLADS: *The Gypsy Laddie* (Child Ballad No. 200); *My Little Mohee*; *I Wonder as I Wander out under the Sky*; *Lulle, Lullay* (The Coventry Carol); *The Seven Joys of Mary*; *The Ballad of Barbary Ellen* (Child Ballad No. 84); sung by John Jacob Niles, mountaineer tenor, with his own dulcimer accompaniments. Victor set No. M-604, four 10-inch discs, price \$6.50.

■ This review must start with a warning to

the reader not to pass by this set in the belief that it presents mountaineer music of the type familiar to listeners of morning radio programs. If it were that sort of thing I would begin with a protest at its inclusion in the red seal lists. Even as it is I must admit that I do not understand its being included in the highest price class while an artist of the calibre of Paul Robeson is still appearing on black. Nevertheless, such considerations aside, this is a particularly interesting and valuable album.

I suppose that any but a really great voice needs to be heard awhile before the listener can become thoroughly accustomed to it, and can honestly tell whether he likes it or not. Mr. Niles' is certainly not a great voice, nor one which can be judged by ordinary standards, but for myself I find that it grows upon me as I listen to it. It is a very light and very high "whiskey" tenor which he extends by the use of a soft and frank falsetto. But he sings as though he means what he says, and his songs thus have the air of authenticity. As we read over his excellently written booklet we realize with some surprise that after all he can look at the songs objectively. His dulcimer accompaniments are a real addition.

The ballads he sings are mostly of a serious cast—three are religious—and all are arresting and fascinating. It is interesting to find the *Coventry Carol* and *The Seven Joys of Mary* textually practically the same as they are found in England, but with American tunes. The Victor sales letter warns us against the possible shock of some off-color texts, but I must confess I find little which is likely to offend any reasonably liberal-minded hearer. The recording is fine, and the album is a real contribution to Americana.

DVORAK-FISHER: *Goin' Home*; sung by Lawrence Tibbett, baritone, with orchestra; and

FOLKSONG: *The Bailiff's Daughter*; sung by Lawrence Tibbett, with piano accompaniment. Victor disc, No. 15549, price \$2.00.

■ William Arms Fisher's popular adaption of the *Largo* movement from Dvorak's *New World Symphony* has somehow been absent from Victor's celebrity list for some time, and so, I suppose, the A side of this disc fills a definite gap. As it is here sung by Mr. Tibbett in his best voice and familiar style, I doubt if there will be any need for another version for many years to come.

The Bailiff's Daughter is, of course, much more interesting to many of us. It is the kind of song which Mr. Tibbett loves to dramatize, singing the fine old melody not unnaturally

in the "artistic" manner rather than in the style of a folk singer. Indeed he (or his anonymous arranger) has made considerable alterations, not only telescoping the words to make them fit into more reasonable length, but even turning one verse into the minor to bring out the dramatic meaning of the words and to afford a contrast. The baritone's voice has never sounded better: it has an expressive and tender quality in this song that would be hard to resist.

There is more evidence than the fact that Tibbett sings with orchestra on one side and with piano accompaniment on the other to indicate that these two selections were not made at the same recording session. I believe that *The Bailiff's Daughter* must be the older, because the surface is the noisiest I have heard in some time.

—P. M.

FRANZ: *Im Herbst*, Op. 17, No. 6; and SCHUBERT: *Im Abendroth*; sung by Kirsten Flagstad, soprano, with piano accompaniment by Edwn McArthur. Victor disc, No. 15645, price \$2.00.

■ By all that is right and logical this should be the vocal disc of the month, for it presents the world's most celebrated soprano in two truly great songs. As a matter of fact, to be bluntly honest, it is one of the poorest recordings of a singer whose discs have not infrequently done her less than justice.

This is particularly sad in the case of *Im Herbst*, because no adequate recording of this masterpiece exists. The one electrical version, by Richard Tauber, is in that singer's most annoyingly sentimental vein, and the pre-World War acoustic by Gadske is a rather rare one. A comparison with that antique, however, is rather disastrous to Mme. Flagstad's effort. Where the rich and vital beauty of the Gadske voice carries dramatic conviction, that of Mme. Flagstad sounds not only tired but not particularly concerned about the meaning of the song. Gadske gets off to a slightly uncertain start, and of course the recording of her day could give her none of the climax possible to our contemporaries. For all that her disc must still remain the standard for this particular song.

Im Abendroth, of course, has fared better on discs. Another old acoustic by Julia Culp suffers from an orchestral accompaniment, but the singer's tone is so melting that this fault can easily be overlooked. Lotte Lehmann's version (Victor 1731) is the best thing in her first Victor Song Recital, a real treat in spite

of the colorlessly played and badly recorded piano accompaniment. Elisabeth Schumann's accompanist serves her better (Victor 6837) although her record dates back, I believe, to the Schubert centennial and has a very poor surface. The singer's individual tone and infallible taste are at their best in this recording. However, it may be impossible to get the domestic pressing of the disc today. In spite of vastly superior recording the uninspired Flagstad disc cannot compare with any of these old favorites.

* * *

GERSHWIN: *Porgy and Bess: It ain't necessarily so; A woman is a sometime thing* (disc 26358), and *Lullaby (Summertime, and the livin' is easy); It takes a long pull to get there* (disc 26359); sung by Paul Robeson, with orchestra. Two Victor 10-inch discs, price 75c each.

■ The late George Gershwin was one of the few white men who could successfully assimilate the style of the negro, and in his opera *Porgy and Bess* he seems to have left a real contribution to the folk lore of the colored race. This little selection which Paul Robeson has made for us includes portions of the music of different characters, but each is sung with such honest simplicity that no one is likely even to question the fact that *Summertime* is a lullaby, and should properly be sung by a woman. Robeson is one of the most dependable artists in his own field, and his voice here is as big, rich and beautiful as ever. His restrained performances carry a really deep conviction, and they have been excellently recorded.

* * *

LILY PONS IN SONG: *Green; Mandoline* (Debussy); *A des oiseaux* (Huë); *Une Tabatière a Musique* (Liadow); *Comment disaient-ils?* (Liszt); *Les Roses d'Ispahan* (Fauré); *Les Filles de Cadix* (Delibes); sung by Lily Pons, soprano, with piano accompaniment by Frank LaForge; and *La Capinera* (Benedict); *Le Beau Danube bleu* (Strauss); *Villanelle* (Dell'Acqua); sung by Lily Pons with orchestra conducted by André Kostelanetz, and flute obbligato by Frances Blaisdell. Victor set M-599, three 10-inch discs and one 12-inch, \$6.50.

■ This month's Victor song recitalist is Lily Pons, and her program is a good representation of the lady and her art. Whether or not one agrees with the sponsor's statement that Miss Pons' contract calls for the recording of unhackneyed material, it will be admitted that the selections have without exception been wisely made to show what the singer

can do. She was in excellent voice when these records were made, and the reproduction of her singing is all that her warmest admirers could ask for.

Surely there is hardly a soprano today who can account more brilliantly for such things as the *Blue Danube Waltz*, *La Capinera*, or that occasion for dazzling singing, *Eva Dell'Acqua's l'illanelle*. As for the songs, the most important contributions are the Huë and the Liszt, though neither is the lyrical masterpiece of its composer. Both were in need of recording, and both are now satisfactorily accounted for. The Debussy songs were done a bit more lyrically by Ninon Vallin for French Odeon. The Liadow is nothing more than a stunt. Fauré's *Les Roses d'Ispahan* suffers from a lack of agreement between Miss Pons and Mr. LaForge as to the tempo at which it should be done. Of course in *Les Filles de Cadix* Miss Pons is quite in her element.

In the coloratura numbers Miss Pons has orchestral accompaniments conducted by her husband, Mr. Kostelanetz, and, quite properly, in the more serious lyrical songs she is accompanied by M. LaForge at the piano. The balance with the orchestra is good, although Miss Blaisdell's flute obbligatos are hardly forward enough to give her a fair blend with the singer. Mr. LaForge's is scarcely a model pianistic clarity, and he has the not uncommon fault of being not strongly enough recorded.

* * *

RESPIGHI: *Nebbie*; and ROSSINI: *Tarantella Napolitana - La Danza*; sung by Donald Dickson, (baritone), with orchestra. Victor 10-inch disc, No. 2024, price \$1.50.

■ This disc introduces Donald Dickson, a young baritone already well known to radio listeners as the possessor of a fine voice and definitely virile style—a singer who is likely to enjoy unusual popular success. He has been an outstanding artist-student at the Juilliard Graduate School, and has appeared briefly at the Metropolitan Opera. For his record debut he has chosen to couple a song which should have graced the domestic catalogues long before this with the old favorite display piece with which Caruso is said to have warmed up his voice every morning.

Nebbie (Mists) is a wonderful song, built around an ascending scale line, somewhat suggestive, in general mood, of Gretchaninoff's celebrated *Over the Steppe*. It is a marvelous study in voice control, but not an easy song, and it cannot honestly be said that Mr. Dickson has been completely successful with it. His scale is not yet quite even enough, his words are a little too carefully mounted, and

his feeling for the song is not sufficiently direct and simple. Add to this a very unfortunate orchestration of the accompaniment.

The Rossini *Tarantella* is much more successful. Here the openness of the singing is more in order, and Dickson is able to toss off the song in a sufficiently lighthearted manner. Here, too, the small orchestra (including a piano) is not so badly misplaced.

P. M.

* * *

ROUSSEL: *Le Jardin mouillé*; and *Coeur en péril*; sung by Pierre Bernac, baritone, with piano accompaniment by Francis Poulenc. Victor ten-inch disc, No. 2011, price \$1.50.

■ Connoisseurs on this side of the Atlantic have long been wishing that Victor would repress at least some of the series of recordings made in France by Pierre Bernac with Francis Poulenc at the piano. Not only is this combination of singer and pianist a particularly happy one, but they have recorded some of the gems of modern French song. This disc containing two lieder of Roussel may have been issued as a feather. Let us hope it meets with the response it deserves, for the remaining recordings of the series can give no end of pleasure. It may not be too fantastic to hope for an album recital by Bernac and Poulenc.

The two songs on this disc are "musts" for every lieder collector. *Le Jardin mouillé* is the more typical of the two, recalling such mood pictures as Koechlin's *L'Hiver* and Georges' *La Pluie* (both so magnificently sung by Povla Frijsch on Victor 1652). The text, by Henri de Régnier, draws a parallel between the rain in the garden and the melancholy of the poet as he looks out of the window. Such a song requires the utmost delicacy in performance, and be it said without reservation that Bernac and Poulenc have produced a masterpiece.

Coeur en péril is even more delightful. The poem is a whimsy of René Chalus, in which he sings of the various grand ladies for whom he might set his cap, but who do not interest him because of one thoughtless girl. The musical setting is perfection itself, and it is presented here with the greatest persuasion by the two artists.

The recording is a model of clarity; and with just a little more of Poulenc the balance would be perfect.

* * *

VERDI: *Simone Boccanegra*: *Dinne alcun la non vedesti*; *Figlia, tal nome palpita* (Act 2); sung by Rose Bampton (soprano) and *Patrisi*; *Piangi su voi* (Act 3); sung by

Lawrence Tibbett (baritone), and *Plebe*, *Patrisi*; *Piangi su voi* (Act 3); sung by Lawrence Tibbett, Rose Bampton, Giovanni Martinelli (tenor), Leonard Warren, (baritone) and Roberts Nicholson (basso), with members of the Metropolitan Opera Chorus Orchestra, conducted by Wilfred Pelletier. Victor disc, No. 15642, price \$2.00.

■ It is strange that so long a time has been allowed to elapse since the discovery of *Simone Boccanegra* by the Metropolitan in 1932, and Mr. Tibbett's superb creation of the title role, before it became possible to give us a sample of the work as performed on the famous New York stage. This opera, a composite of the two Verdi styles of 1857 and 1881, contains some of the composer's loveliest music. The bass aria, *Il lacerato spirito*, of course, has been well known in the concert halls for years, but there are other moments which would well repay an occasional hearing outside the opera house. The soprano aria, *Come in quest'ora bruna*, while not one of the composer's most distinguished, is extremely grateful for the singer and has a charming accompaniment. And the death scene is really tremendous. Victor should not miss the opportunity of recording Mr. Tibbett in this, one of the highest flights of his career.

But to come to the point, the present record has been well worth waiting for. The listener will find in the music many of the elements of the great Verdi of *Otello*—lovely melodic lines, fine orchestration and a mastery of ensemble unsurpassed by any composer. No opera lover can afford to miss this release.

The disc takes on additional interest as the debut on records of Rose Bampton as a so-

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prano. The change which the voice has undergone is rather one of range than of quality, as Miss Bampton is, and has always been, in reality a mezzo-soprano. She seems to experience no difficulties with the tessitura of this music, excepting possibly one high B-flat. Few, indeed, are the contemporary sopranos who can match her fine sense of line—a very necessary virtue in this music. The other singers are mostly familiar in their parts—only Ezio Pinza is missing from the regular Metropolitan cast, his part being taken by Roberts Nicholson. Of course it is Tibbett who quite properly dominates the record, and it is good to be able to preserve a sample of perhaps his finest role. Let us hope for more of the same quality. P. M.

SPEECH

SHERWOOD: *Scenes from Abe Lincoln in Illinois*; played by Raymond Massey, assisted by Adele Longmire, Kevin McCarthy, Calvin Thomas and Wendell K. Phillips. Victor set M-591, price \$3.50.

■ With the tremendously successful recordings of Maurice Evans and Orson Welles, Columbia has taken the lead in the reproduction of famous dramatic scenes. With this set Victor enters the field, and enters rather gloriously with selections from Robert E. Sherwood's Pulitzer Prize play as interpreted by the famous star who did so much to make the drama a success. It is hardly necessary to enter here into a discussion of the play, for it has already become a kind of classic in the American theatre. Those who buy the records will not need to be told anything in advance beyond what they will read in the excellent accompanying booklet, even if they are among those who have neither seen nor read the play. Whether or not they find in Sherwood's and Massey's Lincoln the true historical figure has little to do with the case. There can be no question that these two men have created a character admirable in itself. The important thing is that the recording is extremely lifelike, and the pleasure of the listener can therefore be exactly commensurate with his belief in the drama and its star.

—P. M.

A NEW CONNOISSEURS' LIST

■ Victor has issued a new connoisseur's list apart from their regular monthly releases. If you have not received a copy of this list, we shall be glad to arrange to have a copy forwarded to you. Several items from this list

are reviewed in this issue; the others will be reviewed next month. The following are the items not yet reviewed.

RAMEAU: *Suite in E minor*; played by Wanda Landowska. Set M-593, three discs, \$6.50.

HANDEL: *Suites for the harpsichord*; played by Wanda Landowska. Set M-592, six discs, price \$12.00.

VIVALDI-BACH (arr. Cortot): *Concerto da camera*; played by Alfred Cortot. Set M-573, price \$4.50.

HAYDN: *Quartets Op. 1, No. 1; Op. 20, No. 1; Op. 55, No. 3; Op. 76, No. 4*; Pro Arte Quartet. Set M-595, seven discs, \$14.00.

BEETHOVEN: *Septet in E flat, Op. 20*; B.B.C. Instrumental Septet. Set M-571, five discs, price \$7.50.

HINDEMITH: *Sonata No. 3 (1939)*, viola and piano; played by Hindemith and Sanromá. Set M-752, seven sides, price \$5.75.

FAURE: *Quartet in C minor, Op. 15*; played by Merckel Quartet. Set M-594, four discs, price \$6.50.

OTHER RECORDINGS

CAPUA: *O sole mio*; and VERGINE: *Vieni sul mare*; played by Maurice Thöni (accordionist). Col. 10-inch disc 425-M, price 75c.

DENZA: *Funiculi-Funicula*; and CURTIS: *Torna a Surriento*; played by Maurice Thöni. Col. 10-inch disc, 426M, price 75c.

DONIZETTI: *Lucia di Lammermoor - Fra poco a me ricovere*; PUCCINI: *Manon Lescaut - Donna non vidi mai*; sung by Galliano Masini, tenor, with orchestra. Columbia disc, 10-inch, No. 17159-D, price \$1.00.

Nostalgia, and *Vivere* from the Appia film *Vivere*, sung by Tito Schipa with chorus and orch. Victor 10-inch disc 2023, \$1.00.

BRAHMS: *Quintet in F minor, Op. 34*; played by Rudolf Serkin and Busch Quartet. Victor set M-607, price \$10.00. Victor announces that this set has been delayed by unforeseen trouble in the pressing plant.

SHAKESPEARE: *Julius Caesar - Mercury Text Records*; Orson Welles and Members of the Mercury Theatre. Columbia set C-10, 11 discs, price \$16.50.

WOODFORDE-FINDEN: *Four Indian Love Songs*; Nelson Eddy with orchestra. Columbia set X-150, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.50. Neither this set nor the Shakespeare has been received for review.

THE VOICE OF POETRY, VOL. I: *An anthology of recorded verse*; spoken by Edith Evans. Col. set M-375, six 10-inch discs, price \$6.50.

(To be reviewed in a later issue.)

EARLY CANTATAS AND SONGS; sung by Isabel French, soprano, and Hugues Cuenod, tenor, accompanied by Claude Jean Chiasson, harpsichord, and three string and two flute players. Technichord set T-2, three 10-inch discs and two 12-inch discs, \$5.75.

(A treasurable collection of old music, which will be reviewed next month.)

In the Popular Vein

Horace Van Norman

AAAA—*I Didn't Know What Time It Was*, and *Love Never Went to College*. Benny Goodman and his Orchestra. Col. 35230.

■ The names of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart on a musical comedy program are an almost infallible guarantee of excellence. The general level of musical comedy scores has risen immeasurably within the past ten years or so, and a very large part of the credit must rightfully go to this brilliant team of writers. Along with Porter and Kern, Rodgers holds top rank among American composers for the stage and Hart's lyrics are consistently better than those of any other writer. He has never, so far as I know, written a thoroughly undistinguished lyric, and this is something that no other writer can boast of, not even the resplendent Porter, whose work is often a curious hodge-podge of the banal and the brilliant.

The two numbers above noted are from the current Rodgers and Hart musical, *Too Many Girls*, and if neither of them is as memorable as *Where or When*, or *This Can't Be Love*, or a host of other really superlative songs, they are plainly out of the Tin Pan Alley rut, while *I Didn't Know What Time It Was* seems at least to be headed for a considerable degree of commercial success, always a consummation devoutly to be wished. Offhand, Goodman would seem anything but a happy choice for a brace of Rodgers tunes, but these two turn out surprisingly well, with nicely restrained yet highly vital performances by the ineffable Benny and his bright new band.

The vocals of Louise Tobin are a particularly pleasing feature, especially in *I Didn't Know*.

Mary Jane Walsh, from the cast of *Too Many Girls*, has also done four sides from the show, including these two as well as two gloriously bitter songs, *Give It Back to the Indians* and *I Like To Recognize the Tune*. But her rather steely voice records so poorly and she has so few endearing qualities in her style that I fear they must be discounted. Other and doubtless better recordings of these will be forthcoming later on, we may assume.

AAAA—*Lilacs In the Rain*, and *The Girl With the Pigtales In Her Hair*. Hal Kemp and his Orchestra. Victor 26385.

■ *Lilacs In the Rain*, is a popular song adaptation of the subsidiary theme from Peter de Rose's *Deep Purple* (the original) and as such is a demonstration of how an ingenious writer like de Rose can make his melodies do double duty. If *Lilacs In the Rain* duplicates the success of the popular version of *Deep Purple* itself (which we doubt) de Rose will not have done too badly for himself from his little four-four-minute orchestral sketch. Mitchel Parrish's lyric is tasteful and it is one of the better melodies of the moment, so Kemp is a good choice for this sort of number. Whatever you may think of Kemp, there is no denying his unerring musicianship and all-around technical excellence. Indeed, from this latter standpoint, he sets the standard for the so-called sweet bands. And a number as attractive as this one shows him off to particularly good advantage. The reverse is just one of those things.

AAA—*Twelfth Street Rag*, and *Ain't Cha Comin' Home?* Lionel Hampton and his Orchestra. Victor 26362.

■ Hampton's celebrated hammer technique at the piano is brought into play with its usual dazzling results in that classic of "corn", *12th St. Rag*, which is ideally suited to his brash keyboard antics. This recording, in addition, is graced by some completely remarkable trombone work by Lawrence Brown and some almost equally fine trumpet work by Brown's fellow Ellingtonian, Rex Stewart. The other side is solidly plaintive and has a totally different personnel, the bulk of it drafted from Goodman.

AAA—*Jumpin' On the Blacks and Whites*, and *The Little Things That Mean So Much*. Teddy Wilson and his Orchestra. Columbia 35232.

■ Wilson's wizardry at the keyboard is one of the eternal glories of American dance music and any record that boast a piano chorus by him can't help but be worthy of consideration. The unit which he uses here and which is a permanent one built around himself is an excellent outfit which ranks exceedingly high among colored bands of the moment. His own contribution to *Jumpin' On the Blacks and Whites* is not particularly distinguished (for him), but the slower *Little Things*, a lovely tune which he himself apparently has authored, has a lot of the kind of piano playing which he alone can give us.

AAA—*Good Mornin'*, and *God's Country*. Horace Heidt and his Orchestra. Col. 35235.

■ These two are from the current MGM film version of the musical stage success of two seasons ago, *Babes In Arms*. *Good Mornin'* is a tune from the pen of Nacio Herb Brown, at one time about the most consistent hit writer in the business but a rather obscure figure in recent years. It is a pleasantly bouncy number which Heidt appropriately projects in his customarily bouncy style. *God's Country* is the Harburg-Arlen number, an old friend from the score of *Hooray for What* and one which will probably come into its own now.

AAA—*Ill Wind*, and *Turtle Dove*. Maxine Sullivan. Victor 26344.

■ The sensational popularity of Maxine Sullivan proceeds with little or no signs of diminution, and those prophets of doom who predicted her lapse on the basis of her extremely slim vocal resources are made to hide their heads in shame. There is undeniably a certain wistful, almost sexless charm to her work that is indeed distinctive and, of course, Thornhill's memorable arrangements have long been acknowledged to be an integral part of her success. This is one of the most satisfactory of her recent discs. Harold Arlen's *Ill Wind*, a hauntingly beautiful tune which never received its just due, was a happy choice for revival, while *Turtle Dove* is an extraordinarily lovely song that sounds like an Irish folk tune, although the names of the accredited writers on the label are anything but Celtic. Whatever its origin, it provides Sullivan with one of the most charming vehicles she has ever had on records.

AAA—*South American Way*, and *La Conga en Nueva York*. Desi Arnaz and his Orchestra. Columbia 35216.

■ Here is the out-and-out rumba recording of *South American Way* that apparently everyone has been waiting for. For this is nothing

more or less than a perfectly straightforward rumba tune, which is as it should be. With all credit to Noble's fascinating record, he distorted the number beyond anything that the composer Jimmy McHugh ever had in mind, and this highly competent job supplies a need of long standing. This band, by the way, appears to be offering Cugat the first real competition he has ever had to contend with in the Latin-American field.

AAA—*Bouncing Buoyancy*, and *A Lonely Co-Ed*. Duke Ellington and his Orchestra. Columbia 35240.

■ *Bouncing Buoyancy* is an irresistible affair of the sort that the Duke is able to whip up with little or no effort. With a really swell tune (an item that not many rhythmic novelties of the type can boast of) and a wealth of cunning devices in the rhythm, it's something that's ingenious enough to appeal to almost anyone.

OTHER CURRENT POPULAR RECORDINGS OF MERIT

(The following are rated from quality of performance regardless of record quality.)

AAA—*White Heat*, and *You Can Fool Some of the People*. Jimmy Lunceford and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5156.

AAA—*Satanic Blues*, and *The Sail Fish*. Bud Freeman and the Summa Cum Laude Orchestra. Decca 2781.

AAA—*Oh Lady Be Good*, and *I Surrender Dear*. Artie Shaw and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10430.

AAA—*El Rancho Grande*, and *720 In the Books*. Jan Savitt and his Orchestra. Decca 2771.

AAA—*The Duke's Idea*, and *The Count's Idea*. Charlie Barnet and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10453.

AAA—*Scandal in A Flat*, and *Savoy Stampedede*. Benny Carter and his Orchestra. Vocalion 5112.

AAA—*Vol Vistu Gaily Star*, and *My Cat Fell In the Well*. The Merry Macs. Decca 2759.

AA—*Please Tell Me the Truth*, and *Billy*. Ella Fitzgerald and her Orch. Decca 2769.

AA—*Out of Space*, and *So Many Times*. Glenn Miller and his Orchestra. Bluebird B-10348.

AA—*Dickie's Dream*, and *Lester Leaps In*. Count Basie Kansas City 7. Vocalion 5118.

AA—*Washington and Lee Swing*, and *Peruna*. Bob Crosby and his Orch. Decca 2789.

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